

# ROCKY FLATS STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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## Rocky Flats History: Timeline of Key Events

*Version 3.0 – December 2014*

- 1951 On March 23, *The Denver Post* reports “There Is Good News Today: U.S. To Build \$45 Million A-Plant Near Denver.” Dow Chemical becomes the initial operating contractor.
- 1957 A major fire occurs in Building 771, later deemed the most dangerous building in the complex. The community is not told about fire until 1970, despite the spread of contamination to off-site lands.
- 1969 A major fire in a glove box in Building 776, later declared the second-most dangerous building in the complex, results in the costliest industrial accident in the nation at the time; cleanup took two years.
- 1970 After independent scientists find plutonium on off-site lands, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) announces that the contamination is the result of the 1957 fire and leaking waste drums containing radioactive and hazardous materials.
- 1972 AEC determines it needs to expand the buffer zone around the production buildings; Congress agrees to spend \$6 million to buy an additional 4,600 acres, bringing the total site acreage to approximately 6,400 acres.
- 1973 In April, the Colorado Health Department finds tritium in downstream drinking water supplies but does not alert local officials for five months; the AEC initially denies the presence of tritium at Rocky Flats but later admits to its presence.
- 1974 Gov. Richard Lamm and Rep. Timothy Wirth establish the Lamm-Wirth Task Force on Rocky Flats. The group, which includes site workers and anti-nuclear activists, is charged with making recommendations regarding the future of the site.
- 1975 Rockwell International replaces Dow Chemical as managing contractor.
- 1978 In April, large-scale protests begin at Rocky Flats when 5,000 people turn out for a rally at the west gate; protestors begin camping on railroad tracks leading into the plant site and occupy the tracks until January 1979 when plans are made for a large-scale protest.
- 1979 In April, 9,000 protestors rally outside of Rocky Flats; 300 are arrested, including Pentagon Papers whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg; in August the United Steelworkers of America, the main site union, holds a counter demonstration that draws 16,000.
- 1981 The Lamm-Wirth taskforce issues its report, concluding that relocating Rocky Flats would cost \$2 billion and take 10-15 years.

- 1983 On October 15, 15,000 protestors nearly encircle the 17-mile perimeter of the Rocky Flats site.
- 1986 DOE, the Colorado Department of Health, and the Environmental Protection Agency sign an agreement to allow regulation of radioactive and hazardous waste at Rocky Flats.
- 1987 Rocky Flats Environmental Monitoring Council forms, a community oversight organization. It is replaced in 1993 by the Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board.
- 1989 On June 6, as part of Operation Desert Glow, 80 armed federal agents raid the site to investigate allegations of environmental violations; the contractor Rockwell International later agrees to pay an \$18.5 million fine, the largest in the nation as of that date.
- 1990 EG&G takes over operation of Rocky Flats from Rockwell International.
- 1991 An interagency agreement among DOE, the Colorado Department of Health and EPA is signed, outlining multiyear schedules for environmental restoration studies and remediation activities fully integrated with anticipated National Environmental Policy Act documentation requirements. The approach stymies progress leading the parties five years later to sign the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement (RFCA). The RFCA provides the regulatory basis to accelerate cleanup.
- 1992 In the State of the Union address, President George H.W. Bush announces the **end of the W-88 warhead program**, effectively ending the mission at Rocky Flats.
- 1993 Gov. Roy Romer and Rep. David Skaggs form a 29-member Citizens Advisory Board to provide advice on the technical and policy decisions related to cleanup and waste management activities at Rocky Flats.
- 1995 In July, Kaiser-Hill LLC signs a contract to remediate Rocky Flats; the target completion date is 2010 for an estimated cost of \$7.3 billion.
- 1995 In July, the Future Site Use Working Group issues a comprehensive report of the future use of the site, which includes protecting the 6,000-acre buffer zone as open space, but leaving open questions regarding the future use of the 384-acre core production area (the Industrial Area).
- 1996 DOE, EPA and Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) sign the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement, the regulatory agreement governing the cleanup and closure of Rocky Flats.
- 1997 DOE and the regulatory agencies agree to no on-site burial of Rocky Flats waste.
- 1998 The Industrial Area Transition Task Force issues a report listing six alternatives for use of the Industrial Area. Final determinations about use of the Industrial Area are made in 2001 with the passage of “The Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act of 2001.”
- 1999 In February, the local governments surrounding the site sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU establishes the Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments (RFCLOG). Its goal is to give affected governments greater leverage over cleanup and future use decisions.

- 2001 Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge Act is signed into law; it was a section in the 2002 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 107-107). The Act directs protection of Rocky Flats as national wildlife refuge following completion of cleanup activities; the Act expressly prohibits reindustrialization of the site or local government annexation of the property.
- 2003 DOE, EPA and CDPHE agree to site-wide cleanup levels for soils contaminated with radioactive materials.
- 2005 On October 13, Kaiser-Hill announces physical completion of Rocky Flats cleanup.
- 2006 In September, EPA and CDPHE grant regulatory approval of the cleanup.
- 2007 Rocky Flats buffer zone and off-site lands are deleted from the CERCLA Superfund list.
- 2007 On July 12, jurisdiction over 4,000 acres of the former buffer zone is transferred to the Department of the Interior to be managed as the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge. DOE retains jurisdiction of the vast majority of the former core production area and settling ponds (1,309 acres), as well as jurisdiction over active mining claims (929 acres).
- 2012 DOE transfer additional parcels to the USFWS for inclusion into the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge. DOE retains approximately 150 acres that will be transferred to the USFWS around 2025.

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