

Russian prosecutors file charges against nuclear waste plant chief

Mayak – Russia's Hanford – continues to generate a black history

Planet Save (AP)
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Russian prosecutors have charged the director of the nation's main nuclear waste processing plant with violation of safety rules that led to the dumping of radioactive waste in the rivers, officials said Sunday.

The Russian Prosecutor General's office in the Ural Mountains said in a statement that Vitaly Sadovnikov, the director of the Mayak plant had sanctioned dumping of tens of millions of cubic meters of liquid radioactive waste into the Techa river in 2001–2004, even though the facility had enough money to prevent it.

Instead of preventing the damage to the environment, Sadovnikov had spent the money on maintaining a representative office in the Russian capital and lump payments to himself, it said. The plant's director was banned from living in his residence pending investigation.

Mayak, located near the Ural Mountains city of Chelyabinsk, about 1,500 kilometers (950 miles) east of Moscow, produced nuclear weapons during the Soviet times and is now Russia's main nuclear waste processing plant.

It has been the site of several accidents, including a 1957 waste facility explosion that contaminated 23,000 square kilometers (9,200 square miles), and some environmentalists say the area around it is among the most contaminated on the planet.

Environmentalists and local officials have long warned that artificial lakes containing liquid radioactive waste from Mayak are filled to capacity and could burst into the region's rivers and flow all the way to the Arctic Ocean.