

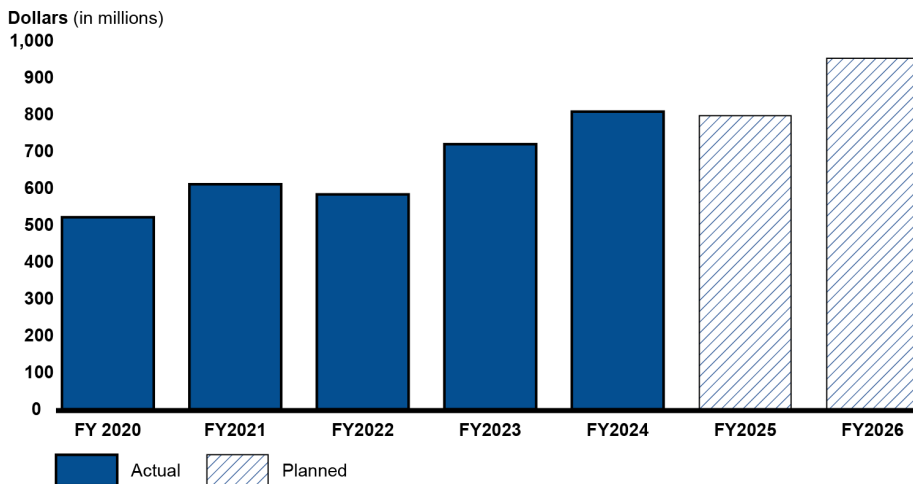
A report to congressional committees

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What GAO Found

The Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM) reported over \$1.5 billion in repair needs across its about 4,300 operating facilities, as of June 2025. EM’s budget request included over \$950 million in maintenance spending in fiscal year 2026, an 80 percent increase since fiscal year 2020.

EM Direct-Funded Maintenance and Repair Spending, Fiscal Years (FY) 2020–2026



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM) congressional budget justification data. | GAO-26-107957

EM sites and headquarters use data from condition assessments of facilities to make maintenance decisions. EM validates these data for accuracy using scorecards. According to GAO’s analysis, some scorecards included inaccurate or unsupported data and did not have completed corrective action plans. Also, GAO’s review of site responses to a questionnaire found that some sites used different methods to generate data elements categorized as performance measures by a DOE order. As EM uses these data to make decisions for funding repairs, accurate and comparable data would help EM to better plan, prioritize, and fund the continued reduction of its maintenance needs.

EM headquarters uses the Master Asset Plan—a document that outlines the infrastructure necessary to meet EM’s current mission requirements—to document its maintenance needs. Eight of 13 EM sites reported that this plan does not capture their maintenance needs, in part because sites have more granular data about their maintenance needs than headquarters uses in this plan. This plan also contains 19 projects identified in a cost savings model that could use surplus funds to produce about \$120 million in savings for EM. However, EM has not communicated the benefits of completing these unfunded maintenance projects to Congress. Aligning its plan with EM site needs and communicating potential benefits would help EM to manage its maintenance needs and save millions of dollars in the long term.

Why GAO Did This Study

EM is responsible for addressing hazardous and radioactive waste at sites contaminated from decades of nuclear weapons production and nuclear energy research. EM has reported significant repair needs and deferred maintenance, which increase safety, cost, and mission risks. EM sites reported that these costs will further increase over the next 5 years.

Senate Report 118-188 accompanying a bill for the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act includes a provision for GAO to evaluate the status of EM’s infrastructure and how EM completes and prioritizes maintenance of its infrastructure. This report (1) describes the status of EM’s infrastructure, (2) examines the extent to which EM maintenance practices align with DOE policies and guidance, and (3) examines how EM prioritizes maintenance in its budget planning. GAO reviewed data on EM facilities and interviewed EM headquarters, site officials, and contractor staff. GAO also analyzed responses from EM sites to a questionnaire on their infrastructure maintenance and reviewed EM budget materials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to DOE. Two recommendations are related to improving data accuracy and comparability for facility data from EM sites. GAO is also recommending EM headquarters incorporate additional information from EM sites in its planning to better communicate maintenance needs, and that EM communicate benefits from its own cost-saving recommendations to Congress. EM concurred with the first two recommendations and partially concurred with the last two recommendations, as discussed in the report.