



Mt. Polley Mine – PolyMet Mine

A Side-by-Side Comparison

On August 4, 2014, a tailings basin breach at the Mt. Polley mine in British Columbia deposited two billion gallons of sulfide mining waste into rivers and lakes in the headwaters of the Fraser River. Experts have called it “the largest mining disaster in Canadian history.”

Prior to the breach, the sulfide mining industry called this mine a poster child for copper mining, the “gold standard” of sulfide mines, and sulfide mining “done right.”

The proposed PolyMet Mine’s similarities to Mt. Polley raise real concerns.

Mt. Polley Mine British Columbia	PolyMet Mine Minnesota (proposed)
Mt Polley tailings waste contained toxic heavy metals and other contaminants.	PolyMet’s initial description of wastes included toxic levels of arsenic, lead, cobalt, copper and sulfate.
The engineering consulting firm of Knight Piesold designed the tailings basin.	Knight Piesold has been involved in reviewing the engineering design for the proposed PolyMet tailings basin.
Tailings basin was rated one of the least likely in B.C. to adversely effect the environment, harm people or destroy roads or structures if it failed.	Simulated breach showed contamination of a 10 square mile area and 34 properties , reaching the Embarrass River within a 3-hour period.
Estimated costs of cleanup run from \$50 million to \$500 million dollars. It is not clear how the cleanup costs will be paid for, or how to protect taxpayers.	PolyMet has not provided damage deposit information to the public. No estimates or provisions for addressing catastrophic events are provided.