

# A Growing Threat

THOUSANDS OF TAILINGS MINE WASTE SITES ACROSS THE WORLD



**364**

known tailings failures since 1915, including 71 since 2010

**2,995**

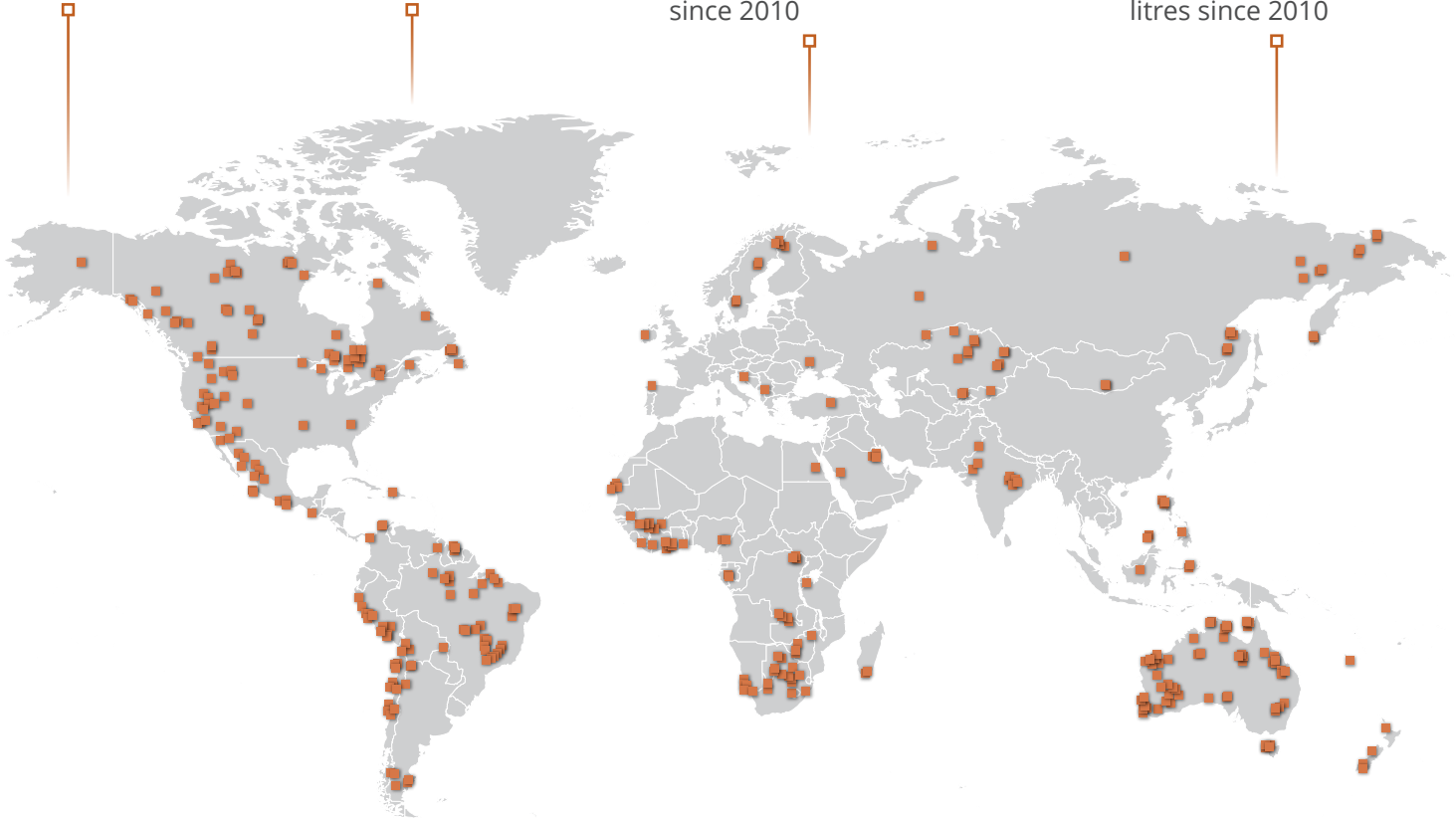
known deaths, including 482 since 2010

**4,000 km**

Over 4,000 km of waterways damaged, including over 2,100 km since 2010

**275 billion**

Over 275 billion litres of tailings waste spilled, including over 100 billion litres since 2010



## What are tailings?

Tailings are finely ground muddy or sandy mine wastes left behind after the valuable metals and minerals have been extracted from the ore. Industrial-scale mining generates billions of tons of tailings waste every year worldwide. Mine tailings can also create extensive damage when the dams that hold them in place fail and release a powerful wave of waste and contaminated water that destroys communities and ecosystems. As shown below, the 2015 collapse of the tailings dam at the Samarco mine created a flash flood of tailings that covered houses in the town of Bento Rodrigues, Brazil. Photo: Rogério Alves/TV Senado.



Photo top by IBAMA from Brazil. • Map information adapted from reuters.com • Data sources: World Mine Tailings Failures database worldminetailingsfailures.org; Center for Science in Public Participation database, CSP2, updated March 2020, pers. communication, csp2.org/tsf-failures-from-1915; Wise Uranium database (updated May 2020) wise-uranium.org/mdaf.html.