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NEWS RELEASE

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New Kirtland Off-Base Groundwater Monitoring Wells Detect Contaminant Unrelated to Fuel Spill

(Albuquerque, NM) – Kirtland Air Force Base has detected Perchloroethylene (PCE) [also known as Tetrachloroethylene] in development water produced from two new well clusters (6 wells total) recently installed Northeast of Kirtland Air Force Base beyond the known edge of the Bulk Fuels Facility Spill. The PCE was detected in samples of water generated during the initial development of the new wells. The water tested is referred to as Investigation Derived Waste (IDW).

The origin of the PCE detected is uncertain, but is not likely associated with the Bulk Fuels Facility Spill currently under characterization and remediation by Kirtland Air Force Base under the supervision of the New Mexico Environment Department.

The initial detection is preliminary, and the New Mexico Environment Department has started the process to begin an immediate investigation to confirm these preliminary results and define the origin of the PCE detection. This will be followed by a plan to move forward on the remediation of the PCE.

Based on these preliminary samples, the following statements can be made:

- PCE has not been detected in Ridgecrest drinking water wells located down-gradient from the monitoring wells. The drinking water remains safe both on and off KAFB.
- PCE was found in the IDW samples in the range of 6.1 to 80 ug/L (micrograms per liter) at both well clusters (Kentucky Street SE (south of Kathryn Ave) and Mesilla Street SE (north of Southern Avenue)). The drinking water maximum contaminant level (MCL) for PCE is 5 ug/L.
- PCE is a solvent typically associated with dry cleaning and metal degreasing operations, and is not a fuel constituent.



- PCE has not been detected in any other KAFB groundwater monitoring wells installed as part of the Bulk Fuels Facility Spill.
- Future samples will be necessary in order to verify these preliminary findings.

In response to these preliminary results, the New Mexico Environment Department, in conjunction with Kirtland Air Force Base, will move forward with further testing of samples from the two recently installed well clusters (6 wells total) and one more just completed well cluster (3 additional wells) just southeast of Phil Chacon Park. All 9 groundwater wells from the 3 clusters are scheduled to be sampled November 5-8, 2012. The New Mexico Environment Department will be jointly collecting samples for independent analysis. Those sample results and validation are expected by the end of December.

“Had it not been for the joint efforts of Kirtland Air Force Base and the New Mexico Environment Department, this contaminant may have sat undetected for years to come,” said NMED Secretary David Martin. “We are determined to confirm the source of this PCE contamination and work with the City of Albuquerque, the EPA and the neighborhood to clean this up.”

NMED will conduct an investigation to determine if any businesses that used PCE were located in the vicinity of the well clusters in the past. If follow-up samples verify the presence of PCE in the groundwater, the New Mexico Environment Department will work with EPA to develop a plan to address remediation of the PCE contamination. The New Mexico Environment Department has extensive institutional experience remediating PCE from groundwater at many sites in New Mexico.

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