

**Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board
to the
Department of Energy/Los Alamos National Laboratory**

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TOTAL PERMANENT

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General

Agenda

March 12, 1996

- I. Call to order-Antonio Delgado
 - 1. Approval of Agenda
 - 2. Approval of Minutes
- II. Public Comments
- III. DOE Waste Management/Environmental Restoration FY98 Budget Briefing
 - Name 45min.
 - Questions from the Citizens' Advisory Board 15min.
- IV. Old Business
 - 1. Approval of the Code-of-Conduct
 - 2. Low Energy Demonstration Accelerator Environmental Assessment
 - Eugene Colton 30min.
 - Question from the Citizens' Advisory Board 15min.
- V. New Business
 - 1. Subcommittee Reports
 - A. Public Participation/Education - Dolores Salazar
 - B. Operational Procedures/By-Laws - Carl Tsosie
 - C. Work Plan/Budget - Glenn Lockhart
 - D. Individual Issues - Robert Castille



DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board To The Department of Energy/Los Alamos National Laboratory

Tuesday, February 13, 1996

PARTICIPANTS:

Board Members Present:

Bernadette Chavira-Merriman
Dr. Antonio Delgado, Co-Chair
Orlando Arellano
Robert Castille
Hank L. Daneman
Glenn Lockhart
Loyda Martinez
Corrine Sanchez
Mike Terrill
Elmer Torres
Manny Trujillo
Carl Tsosie
Dolores Salazar
Lorenzo Valdez

Board Members Not Present:

Sara Atencio
Nick Salazar
Karen Young

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Herman Le-Doux, DOE, Designated
Federal Officer
Ken Hargis for Tom Baca, LANL
Coby Maceroy for Benito Garcia, NMED

Ex-Officio Members Not Present:

Barbara Driscoll, EPA

Los Alamos National Laboratory:

Marja Schaner for Carmen Rodriguez, Community Involvement & Outreach

CAB Support Staff:

Kimberly Roybal, SCIENTECH, Inc.
Bill Mason, SCIENTECH, Inc.

The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (CAB) to the Department of Energy/Los Alamos National Laboratory met at the San Ildefonso Gymnasium, San Ildefonso, New Mexico on February 13, 1996. The meeting was opened with a blessing

prayer given by Tim Martinez, Lt. Governor of San Ildefonso Pueblo. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Bernadette Chavira-Merriman at 6:45 p.m. with 15 voting CAB members present. This constituted a quorum. Dolores Salazar suggested that the subcommittee reports only be addressed under old business and not under both new and old business. This request was approved by the co-chair conducting the meeting and with the change noted the agenda was unanimously approved. Dolores Salazar and Bernadette Chavira-Merriman submitted typographical error changes to the minutes of the January 9, 1996 meeting and with these changes noted, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

1. **Eugene Colton, Document Manager, Low-Energy Demonstration Accelerator (LEDA) Environmental Assessment (EA).** Mr. Colton gave a brief description on the EA. Bernadette suggested that Mr. Colton be put on our next CAB meeting agenda to give an in-depth presentation. Mr. Colton said that he would be pleased to do so because the background could clarify the purpose of the EA. Dolores Salazar requested that Mr. Colton provide the CAB with the assessment as soon as it is released. Mr. Colton passed out a sign up sheet requesting the name and address of those members and public that would be interested in receiving the EA. He said the EA would be released in a little over a week.

2. **Chris Mechels,** raised concern about tracking of Tiger Team Effort. Is the CAB doing anything with the Tiger Team Effort. He made a recommendation back at the December meeting that the CAB get involved with this and he has heard nothing.

Bernadette Chavira-Merriman made the comment to Mr. Mechels that she understands his frustrations and the board is doing its best, but ~~there~~^{there} is a lot of work to get done.

Herman Le-Doux said the CAB had requested involvement in the Tiger Team findings. Mr. Le-Doux indicated DOE had offered some type of involvement depending on the level the CAB would like to play in the reprioritization in the Tiger Team Findings. DOE has to place all Tiger Team Findings in the Reading Room. DOE understands and recognizes that the data bases that LANL and DOE use are different. They are in the process of going back and correlating the open and closed Tiger Team Findings. The next step after that is the reprioritization. Glenn Lockhart has requested to be part of the reprioritization and DOE is certainly open to his involvement.

Bob Castille also made the comment that the CAB is a parttime effort with full-time responsibilities. And the CAB is working on what is most important. The Individual Issues Subcommittee feels that it first needs to get a report from Environmental Restoration with prioritization.

Mr. Mechels made the comment that if the CAB keeps proceeding at this rate we should not respond at all.

AL Shapolia, Pojoaque NM, Mr. Shapolia is an ex-employee of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. He believes that he got thyroid cancer from working at the Lab. He also believes that LANL is responsible for the increase in cancer in the Los Alamos area. He asked a question of the board that if anyone had the medical records for the people of San Ildefonso Pueblo.

Corrine Sanchez answered not as an expert on the pueblo but as an individual with the same concerns. Her response to Mr. Shapolia was that as everyone knows medical records are private but as to the best of her knowledge there are no background records. She also responded that the pueblo needs to work with the LANL to see if the health risks are there and they need to make LANL accountable not as individuals but as a community.

Mr. Shapolia also made a comment that he met a women with thyroid cancer who also worked at the lab. She told him that she and thirteen other persons in her group have thyroid cancer.

Dolores Salazar asked what group they were employed at.

Mr. Shapolia said that they worked at the Administration Building, TA-3.

DOE/LANL Environmental Restoration Report

Dave Mcinroy for Jorg Jansen, Environmental Restoration Process Overview. A presentation was made to the board by Mr. Mcinroy. He presented the board with a handout that consisted of his presentation. His presentation covered the Historical Milestones. Environmental Restoration Project Mission, which is to protect human health and the environment from hazardous and radioactive wastes, to meet environmental cleanup requirements, and to clean up effectively. He also talked about the No Further Action Criteria which concludes that sites are no longer contaminated. He talked about accelerated cleanup and intern actions. And he finally presented life-cycle work off of potential release sites and projected actions which concluded that the ER should be completed by approximately 2008. Jorg Jansen will be giving a more in-depth presentation at the February 17 work session.

Old Business

Next Three Meeting Places

Glenn Lockhart suggested that the next three meeting places take place at the local pueblos. He suggested San Juan Pueblo, Pojoaque Pueblo and Santa Clara Pueblo. A question was raised concerning how we were going to invite ourselves. Glenn said he did not think it was a problem seeing that we have members from each community except from Pojoaque. As part of our public input it would be in our best interest to go to all of the Northern New Mexico communities. Elmer Torres also suggested that since he is the Chairman of the Eight Northern Pueblos Board he would be willing to ask the Governors of each pueblo if they would allow the CAB to use one of its facilities. Elmer will let Kimberly Roybal know if she needs to draft memos requesting these locations. Carl Tsosie added that he would like to see all the other Governors involved as much as possible. And he would help Elmer and Kimberly. It was agreed on unanimously by the board.

Executive Committee Mission and Membership

Glenn Lockhart said that it is his understanding that the subcommittee chairs and the co-chairs constitute the executive committee and principal of reason of it is to be able to address administrative matters and advise the co-chairs on procedures process in addition the Operating Procedures and Mission Statement Subcommittee. The chairs of each subcommittee are Bob Castille, Carl Tsosie, Dolores Salazar, Glenn Lockhart along with Bernadette, Antonio and the Ex-Officio members.

Ian Abbey, Los Alamos, NM, Mr. Abbey had an objection to the formation of the executive committee. His concern deals with the mechanism the public will now use to give its concerns to the CAB if it has to go through committees.

Bob Castille, Lorenzo Valdez, and Bernadette Chavira-Merriman all responded to Mr. Abbeys concern. There response was that the CAB is still in the process of making things happen. The CAB has a lot of issues and work to accomplish and three hours a month does not allow for enough time. And if the public has particular concern the CAB will do their best to address it. There also was a suggestion made that maybe the CAB should hire a second support staff person. Not just someone to set up the meetings but someone to deal with the particular concerns of the public and expedite there issues.

Glenn Lockhart also responded to revert back to the early meeting the reason that we were going around to different sites is to identify issues and until we have issues and have a wide scope of them and a complete list it is not a good idea to set priorities for the CAB to address the issues. Otherwise we get started with one issue and another issue comes up which we regard is more important that one the CAB is currently dealing with. Do we drop the one we started but didn't complete in order to attack the newest problem. That is not productive. If we get a comprehensive list of the issues than we can prioritize them and have a fair occurrence of success.

Subcommittee Reports.

Dolores Salazar, Chair, Public Participation/Education Subcommittee (PP/ES). At the last meeting that the PP/ES had they also discussed and decided that as a committee they would concentrate on the educational part of the subcommittee and spend less time on the public participation. Subcommittee has also decided to put together a symposium for teachers and superintendents of local school districts to try to start a network between the different school districts. They are trying to tap in with other resources and because of this effort the subcommittee met with representatives from Pioneer West which is a company that is working through the State Land Commission to gather data from communities. They explained how they gathered their data and what kind of data they wanted to gather. They gave the subcommittee interesting suggestions and comments. And said they would share the data with the subcommittee. The main concern is to find out what is happening in the individual communities versus New Mexico as a whole. They are going out to the communities to listen and what they want to hear is what are the communities doing about environmental education, they want the people to listen and discuss issues. They are collecting data on what their needs are and what their interests are. What kinds of workshops they would like to have. And they are setting up systems so the communities can talk to each other. They have started with conversational meeting in five regions and will be conducting these meetings in Northern New Mexico in the next fiscal year.

Herman made a comment that he is not really sure where the PP/ES is going. He would anticipate that the subcommittee would come up with issues that the communities have and maybe come up with some recommendations to the full board which the board will then pass on to DOE so that the Los Alamos National Laboratory can help the communities in those specific areas. The manpower and the resources that are necessary to accomplish what the subcommittee is trying to suggest is beyond the means of the CAB.

Antonio Delgado made comment back to the issue of hiring a staff person in saying that the subcommittee obviously feels very strong about hiring someone. And maybe the subcommittee should make a proposal on the dollar amount and come back to the board with a recommendation. As a group we should support that endeavor of the subcommittee and if the resources from LANL and DOE are not there we proceed and have outside help, as Lorenzo has pointed out, to make it happen. He also made comment that at one time they had discussions on hiring a public relations background and in the end we can use this person but it will have to come out of the budget anyway. So his recommendation would be that the subcommittee should do take this on. Antonio also added that he was writing up a draft of the presentation that he and Bernadette gave to the Congressional Delegation on the CAB, and would have that for everyone at the next CAB monthly meeting.

Bob Castille, Chair, Individual Issues Subcommittee (IIS). Bob feels that the subcommittee does not have enough information to make a list of priorities. He said that they are in need of having a process experience with Tom Baca so they can develop a process and substance. He said that the subcommittee is looking forward to the work session on Saturday so the board can begin to make recommendations as a result.

Carl Tsosie, Chair, Operating Procedures/By Laws Subcommittee (OP/BL). Carl was not present at the last OP/BY subcommittee meeting so he turned the report over to Glenn Lockhart who was present. They discussed the agenda for the working session. They moved on to the code-of-conduct. Glen had gone through the information that was drafted by Dolores Salazar and categorized it, crossed references with the old items, added some verbiage and the subcommittee suggested that it be discussed at the work session on February 17. Carl added that the code of conduct is needed so that all the CAB members respect each other, the public, and the hosts of the CAB meetings.

Glenn Lockhart, Chair, Work Plan/Budget Subcommittee (WP/BS). Glenn believes that the BPS subcommittee should meet as soon as possible. He added that he they cannot make recommendation until other subcommittees give the WP/BS their feed back for the moneys they will need so he can incorporate it into the budget.

New Business

Juan Montez, Questa, NM. Mr. Montez made an observation that Benito Garcia from NMED and Tom Baca from LANL were not present again.

George Dials, Manager Carlsbad Area Office. Mr. Dials gave a presentation on the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and included a handout to the CAB members. His presentation involved WIPP milestones that involved choosing the location to the actual operation of the site. This process is still in progress it has taken forty two years and is scheduled to open in the year 1998. He gave some information on the Carlsbad area office which was opened in 1993 to lead the nation's transuranic waste disposal efforts. And the standards that DOE has placed on the WIPP site with the motto operating with openness. Mr. Dials gave information on why the Carlsbad site was chosen. Saying that most deposit of salt are found in stable geological areas with very little earthquake activity, assuring the stability of a waste repository, there is an absence of fresh flowing water that could move waste to the surface, salt is relatively easy to mine, and lastly the rock salt heals its own fractures because of its plastic quality. Emergency response was also talked about. The WIPP's State Training and Education Program (STEP) has trained more than 9,000 emergency response professional in 12 states. The DOE provides six STEP courses. Mr. Dials ended his presentation with the transportation of the waste. It is done in what is called a Transuranic Packing Transporter Model 2. It is eight feet in diameter and 19 feet high. Doubly-contained, non-vented, and constructed of stainless

steel. It is certified by the Nuclear Regulatory commission and meet U.S. Department of Transportation safety requirements.

Lorenzo Valdez had a question concerning the training of fire and police officials in the community of Española. His concern is that they are not directly on the WIPP route but they will be one of the first to respond because they are one of the closest to the route.

Dolores Salazar had a question concerning the risk of an accident. She stated that the drivers of the trucks can have all the training in the world but what about the civilian drivers.

Handouts

Hank Danemen, CAB. Hank passed out three handouts: the first one was a letter to Herman Le-Doux requesting the services of a public relations specialist. The letter states that the Public Affairs Office at Los Alamos National Laboratory is willing to provide the part-time service of one of its staff from its existing budget or the increase of the CAB budget to \$220,000 dollars per year to provide those services from a contractor. The letter gives Herman thirty days to respond to the board.

Hank also passed out a letter that he sent to Cong. Bill Richardson and Sen. Pete Domenici on the LANL-Congressional Representatives Review. And finally he gave a hand out that he sent to the Ex-Officio Members on Technology Transfer.

Dolores Salazar handed out a number of article about LANL and DOE.

Next CAB meeting will be held at the Northern Pueblos Agency, San Juan Pueblo on March 12, 1996 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Certification:

These minutes are an accurate and complete summary of the matters discussed and conclusions reached at the meeting of the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board to the Department of Energy/Los Alamos National Laboratory which met at the San Ildefonso Gymnasium, San Ildefonso, New Mexico.

Certified by:

_____, Chair

Date

Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board to the
Department of Energy/Los Alamos National Lab
c/o Northern New Mexico Community College
1002 North Oñate Street
Española, NM 87532

Invitation of Discussion

Date:: April 3, 1996

Time:: 9:00 to 2:00

Place:: Northern New Mexico Community College

Lunch Provided

Luncheon Speaker:

Please RSVP by 3-24-96

The Secretary of Energy shall conduct an education program to ensure the long-term supply of personnel with skills critical to the ongoing mission of the Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons complex. Under the the program, the Secretary shall provide-

1) education programs designed to encourage and assist students in study in the fields of math, science, and engineering

2) programs that enhance the teaching skill of teachers who teach students in such fields; and

3) education programs that increase the scientific understanding of the general public areas of importance to the nuclear weapons complex and to the DOE National Laboratories.

Of the funds authorized to be appropriated to the DOE for fiscal year 1996 under section 2101(a), \$10,000,000 may be used for the purpose of carrying out the education program under this section.

The previous statement is an area in which the Public Participation/Education Subcommittee is very concerned with. As a subcommittee we would like to invite you to a Round Table Discussion titled Science Educational Outreach "What do You Want." We are looking for feedback on the needs of the schools, communities, and businesses.. The following are some of the topics that we will be discussing at the round table.

Topics that will be discussed:

1. Prioritize the Education Outreach from the DOE of and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in what age groups or educational levels.
2. How could DOE and LANL make scientist available to the educators. And how would you utilize these scientist resources if they were made available.
3. Sample project development.
4. How do we measure the success of the programs that are implemented by DOE and LANL.
5. Standardize Test
6. What is the current program impact affecting your school.
 - Are there any?
 - If there are what are they?
7. How does science education effect technology transfer.
8. Science Museum. How can it be put to use?
9. Criteria for employment
10. Recommendation on how they spend their budget.

THE NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD
to the
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY/LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MONTHLY MEETING

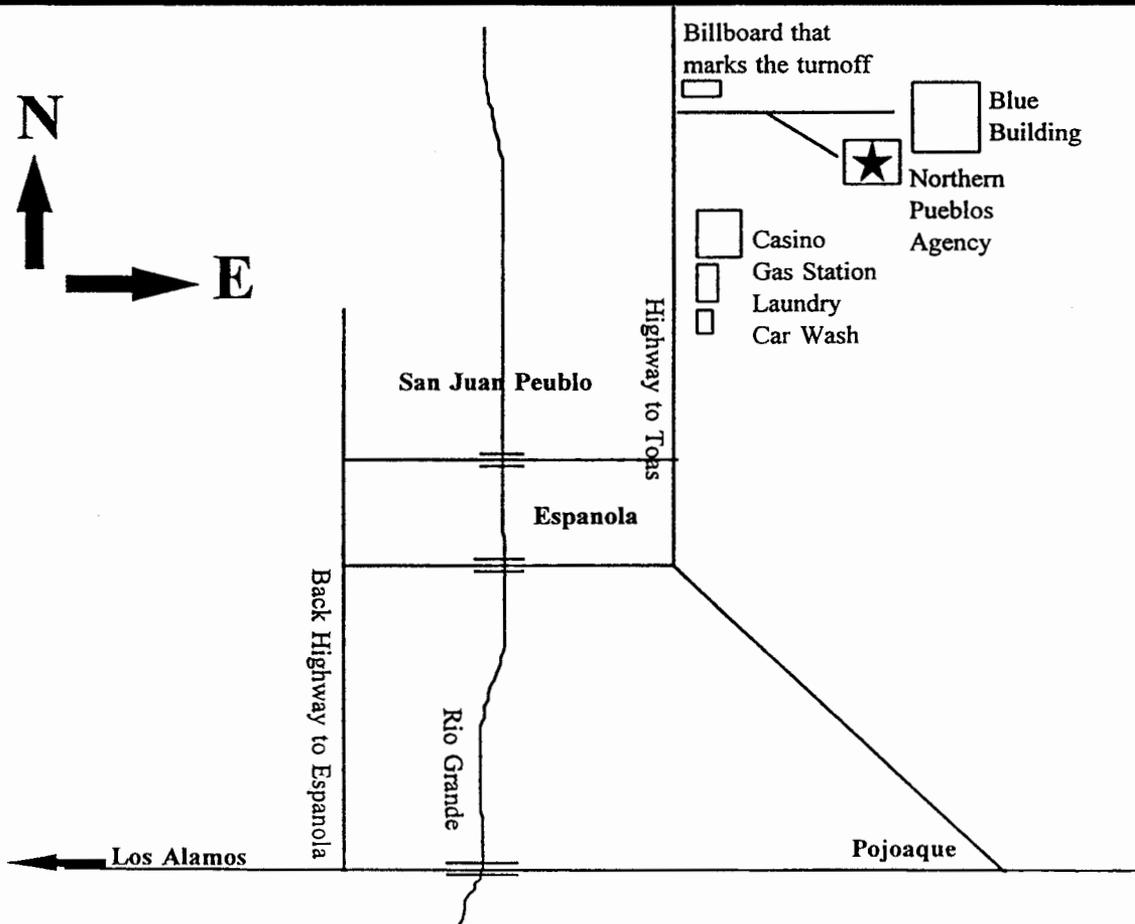
The CAB meetings are open to the public and the CAB invites oral and/or written comments. Anyone wishing to make an oral presentation at public meetings should contact the CAB prior to the meetings. Written statements may be filed with the CAB either before or after the meetings.

March 12, 1996
BIA/NPA
Northern Pueblos Agency
San Juan Pueblo
PO Box 4259
Fairview Station
Espanola, NM 87532

The CAB shall be a nonpartisan, advisory group representing the diverse interests of Northern New Mexico pertaining to the past, present, and future activities at the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

If you want to learn more about the CAB and Subcommittees, please call the CAB office at:

1-800-753-8970



Draft, 1/26/96 FOR DISCUSSION AT WORK SESSION ON February 3, 1996

NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZEN'S ADVISORY BOARD
to the
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY/LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY

Code of Conduct

POLICY: Co-Chairs will enforce this Code of Conduct at regular and special meetings. Subcommittee Chairs will enforce this Code at Subcommittee meetings.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS: Philosophy -- Attendance is required to conduct business; Co-chairs and Subcommittee Chairs are charged with orderly conduct of business.

1. Start/end meetings on time. (FORMER 1, 2)
2. Give sufficient advance notice to staff support if you cannot attend a meeting. You may represent the quorum. (FORMER 7)
3. Show courtesy to Co-Chairs and Subcommittee Chairs; inform them ahead of time of issues that may be raised at meetings. (FORMER 19)
4. The public needs to be informed of cancelled meetings. (ADDED AT JANUARY MEETING)

CONDUCT AT MEETINGS: Philosophy -- Each member is entitled to state opinions and be heard with respect.

1. Wait to be recognized before speaking; no interruptions, no side conversations while others are speaking. (FORMER 3, 4)
2. Stay focused on issues during the meeting. (FORMER 9)
3. Strive for a positive outlook, be open minded, no idea is too small. (FORMER 11, 12, 13)
4. Don't dominate meetings, treat all members equally. (FORMER 5, 10) Don't repeat arguments. (ADDED) Be courteous to the public. (ADDED)
5. Judge/criticize the issue/ideas, not the individual or organization. (FORMER 6)

TEAM MEMBER: Philosophy -- The CAB works toward making decisions through consensus. Members rely on support from other members to fulfill the CAB's mission.

1. Keep in perspective who the CAB has been chartered to serve (FORMER 15) -- both the citizens of Northern New Mexico AND the Department of Energy/Los Alamos National Laboratory. (ADDED)
2. Disclose conflicts of interest. (ADDED)
3. Carry out assignments on schedule, the rest of the team is relying on you. (FORMER 8)
4. Respect confidences. (FORMER 14)
5. Silence means consent. (FORMER 17) If you feel strongly that the CAB recommendation is erroneous, you have a duty to file a minority report to DOE. (ADDED)
6. Support implementation of CAB decisions publicly, even though you may not totally agree and even though you may have filed a minority report. If you miss a meeting, accept what took place. (FORMER 16 and 18)

Comments at the Working Session of the
NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD
to the
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY/LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL
LABORATORY
February 17, 1996

Re: Discussion of 1998 Waste Management Budget at CAB Work Session.

Please consider the possibility of pre-charging for waste management concerns as

potential waste items enter a facility, i.e. before waste generation. This type of

action would definitely minimize waste generation. If not feasible for the '98 budget

please keep in mind for the future. For questions/details please call.

Re: Public Participation/Education Sub-committee Report by Dolores. The

Environmental Awareness and Radiation Education proposal to the DOE through the

Sanctuary Foundation passed before this CAB subcommittee in Fall 1995. We are in

the process of re-funding this program. Your support would be very helpful. We can

provide a copy of the proposal for you information if there is interest. Our education

program will meet several of the needs stated in Dolores' summary.

Name Phyllis Panzeter

Phone 988-2939

Address The Sanctuary Foundation, P.O. box 10110, Santa Fe, NM 87504

NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD to the
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY/LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY
c/o Northern New Mexico Community College
1002 North Oñate Street, Española, New Mexico 87532
(505)753.8970 or (800)753.8970 or (505)655.5326 fax(505)747.2148

No Explanation for Thyroid Cancers

of them potentially could have been caused by radiation exposure from the nuclear weapons lab.

Researchers ruled out the other 10 cases for various reasons:

- Six of those diagnosed with the disease had lived in Los Alamos County less than two years. Because radiation-caused cancer is thought to take two to four decades to develop, those six likely had the cancer when they moved to the county, the study said.

- Two of the 31 developed a form of thyroid cancer that is not thought to be linked to radiation exposure.

- Two had received "therapeutic" radiation treatments to the head and neck in the 1940s and 1950s for such benign conditions as ear infection, enlarged thymus gland and enlarged tonsils. This kind of medical radiation exposure has been shown to cause thyroid cancer.

Even among the remaining 21 cases, the study found several possible causes of the cancers.

Almost all of the 14 men diag-

nosed with thyroid cancer were lab employees and worked as machinists, engineers, physicists and chemists. However, few of the women with thyroid cancer worked at the lab. Most were homemakers.

Other possible factors were a family history of thyroid diseases or other types of cancer; women who had previously had breast cancer; and people who were overweight.

The study also noted that doctors in Los Alamos, an affluent community with good health care, may be more likely to detect thyroid cancer than doctors in other communities.

The cancer study was launched when residents raised concerns about a seemingly high number of brain cancer cases in Los Alamos.

An initial review of cancer cases concluded the number of brain cancers in Los Alamos was not "particularly unusual or alarming." But that review instead found an unexpectedly high rate of thyroid cancer.

Fairly Rare Thyroid Cancer, Rarely Fatal

Here is information on thyroid cancer from the New Mexico Department of Health and epidemiologist William Athas:

What is the thyroid?

The thyroid is a gland in the front of the neck that secretes hormones that control body metabolism. It is critical for normal growth and development.

What is thyroid cancer?

Thyroid cancer, a malignant tumor of the thyroid, is a relatively rare and usually nonfatal form of cancer. It accounts for about 1 percent of all cancers diagnosed annually in the United States. Because the majority of thyroid cancers are slow-growing, they are rarely fatal and are usually treatable.

How do you detect it?

It often is detected as a lump in the front of the neck.

Who is at risk?

Women are two to three times more likely than men to get thyroid cancer. It is particularly common among young and middle-aged women.

What causes thyroid cancer?

That's largely an unanswered question. One cause is exposure to such ionizing radiation as X-rays to the head and neck and fallout from nuclear weapons, demonstrated by high rates of thyroid cancer among Japanese atomic bomb survivors and Pacific Islanders exposed to fallout from nuclear tests.

It's possible that people who work around radiation sources, such as

X-ray technicians, may be at increased risk.

Epidemiologists estimate that thyroid cancer induced by radiation exposure is not diagnosed for 20 to 40 years.

People who live in areas with high levels of natural background radiation or near nuclear installations have not shown an increased risk. Nor are diagnostic X-rays thought to measurably increase the risk of thyroid cancer.

Other possible risk factors include a family history of thyroid cancer, breast cancer and being overweight.

Why the concern in Los Alamos County?

The rate of thyroid cancer in Los Alamos County generally followed rates in the state and nation from 1970 to the mid-1980s. However, in 1987, the numbers of Los Alamos cases began to spike sharply. Between 1987 and 1993, the thyroid cancer rate in the county was four times as high as statewide rates. The rate has declined somewhat in 1994 and 1995.

How many county residents have thyroid cancer?

Between 1970 and 1987, 23 cases of thyroid cancer were diagnosed in Los Alamos County, of which 18 were women.

Between 1988 and 1995, 31 cases were diagnosed, including 19 women. One county resident has died of thyroid cancer since 1970.

→ DOUG McCLELLAN

ABC Journal 2/24/96 Study Can't Explain Thyroid Cancers

By DOUG McCLELLAN
Journal Staff Writer

What's behind the sharp spike of thyroid cancer cases from 1987 through 1993 in Los Alamos County?

That's still a largely unanswerable question, an epidemiological study has concluded.

"The likelihood is that the recent excess had multiple causes ... some of which may never be identified," a draft version of the study, released Friday, concluded.

Los Alamos County residents developed thyroid cancer, a rare but generally curable disease, at a rate four times higher than the state's and nation's in that period. The number of new cancer cases in Los Alamos has been dropping since 1993 but remains higher than state and national norms.

There has long been a concern that radiation from Los Alamos National Laboratory may have contributed to the high thyroid cancer rate. But the study, headed by epidemiologist William Athas of the New Mexico Tumor Registry,

found no conclusive evidence.

"Finding an elevated cancer rate within a geographically defined area, such as a county or town, invariably raises a concern that the excess cases were caused by environmental hazards," the study said. "Unfortunately, the complex multifactorial (causes) of most forms of cancer rarely permits a clear-cut response to such concerns."

In a telephone interview, Athas said it is rare that researchers can pinpoint specific causes of cancer in communities.

He said he hoped the study would resolve some of the speculation that arose when the high number of Los Alamos thyroid cancers first were recognized in 1993.

Athas released the draft report for comments through March 15 and has scheduled a public forum on findings at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Fuller Lodge, 2132 Central in Los Alamos.

The study focused on the 31 cases of thyroid cancer detected between 1988 and 1995 and concluded that, at most, 21