



5/19/2000

General

FEMA DISASTER FIELD OFFICE

U.S. EPA Region 6

Santa Fe, New Mexico

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Post-it* Fax Note	7671	Date	# of pages ▶
To	<i>Maes Straka</i>	From	<i>D. Gray</i>
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Phone #		Phone #	
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DISASTER INFORMATION
Joint Information Center



New Mexico Office of Emergency Management Federal Emergency Management Agency USDA Forest Service
Los Alamos National Laboratory National Park Service Bureau of Indian Affairs Department of Energy
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New Mexico County Agencies American Red Cross

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEMA-DR-1329-NM-PR53
May 19, 2000

Media Contact: FIRE INFORMATION: 505-753-2032
FEMA/STATE: 505-753-2870

CERRO GRANDE RADIOLOGIC ANALYSIS COMPLETE

SANTA FE, NM -- The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the US Department of Energy (DOE) received from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the second and third sets of data describing radiologic conditions around Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Cerro Grande fire. The first set of data was delivered Wednesday.

A report summarizing the results of the second round of samples follows this news release. All three summary reports are available at www.nmedv.state.nm.us. A preliminary, independent NMED analysis of these data will be posted at this web site some time Friday.

In summary, EPA has determined that the data from three days of sampling by the EPA air radiation monitors show low levels of radiation, with only some slight increases in radiation above normal levels. These measured increases in radiation are expected to occur during forest fires because naturally occurring radioactive materials are released when trees and vegetation burn. There was no apparent increase of radiation from Los Alamos National Laboratory. The EPA will be receiving chemical data for the next few days as it is generated from the laboratories. This information is expected to be released by late Friday, May 19, 2000.

The DOE believes that the subject EPA results are consistent with conclusions drawn from earlier measurements. The elevated levels of gross alpha and beta radiation observed in the EPA data are in agreement with parallel measurements taken by the DOE. The results of the analysis to date are consistent with the presence of only short-lived naturally occurring radioactive materials.

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Note to Radio News Editors: Sound bites on disaster recovery efforts are available from FEMA officials on the FEMA Radio Network. To record sound bites, dial 1-800-323-5248 and follow recorded information.



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New Mexico National Guard	Environmental Protection Agency	Small Business Administration
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEMA-DR-1329-NM-PR54
May 19, 2000

Media Contact: FIRE INFORMATION: 505-753-2032
FEMA/STATE: 505-753-2870

**CERRO GRANDE FIRE
CHEMICAL CONTAMINANT AIR SAMPLING AROUND
LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY
FIRST DATA SET**

SANTA FE, NM – The air and radiation monitors show no evidence of toxic or radioactive releases from Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Cerro Grande fire. Today, the evaluation of the first set of chemical data is being announced.

From May 12 to May 17, a joint air sampling effort was conducted by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the Department of Energy (DOE) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify airborne pollutants as a result of the Cerro Grande fire.

Air quality monitors at six stations were established around and on the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) property specifically looking for chemical contaminants in the air. Individual sampling station locations were mutually agreed to by NMED, DOE, and EPA. This array of stations was designed to provide representative samples of breathing zone air. Sampling stations were supplied with a mixture of air sampling devices. Some were specifically for the analysis of metals, others for total airborne particulates, and still others for organic contaminants.

The information being released today is based on analytical data which has not received final quality assurance (QA) checks. The QA process is always lengthy and is expected to be complete in around three weeks for this data set. The available data is sufficient to interpret potential health effects, and normal healthy individuals exposed to observed concentrations would not be expected to experience adverse health effects. The precautionary evacuations significantly reduced human exposure.

(more)

Chemical Contaminant air sampling /page 2

DOE collected data on total suspended particulates and have posted that information on their website. It appears that total suspended particulates were elevated whenever there was direct exposure to smoke plumes as expected. However, almost all of the samples collected were below EPA recommended 24-hour standards for particulates. NMED has deployed additional monitors for particulate matter in Santa Fe, Espanola and Hernandez (north of Los Alamos). NMED's existing monitoring network of particulate matter monitors will continue to be operated, and the sample frequency is being increased.

All of the air contaminants were measured in parts per billion (ppb), which is at extremely low levels. Twenty-one pesticides were specifically looked for in the analysis. No pesticides were found in any EPA samples. Twenty-three metals were specifically sought in the metals analysis. All metals analysis showed very low concentrations of suspended metals, well below accepted workplace concentrations. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry concluded that the concentrations of metals in the smoke are not of health concern and are not expected to cause adverse health effects. The metals in the smoke appear to be attributable to the burning vegetation, consistent with the fact that over 40,000 acres of coniferous forest have burned. Sixty-three separate organic compounds were sought in that analysis, and only 12 organic compounds were found in concentrations high enough to be detected. The highest observed concentration of organic was 10 times less than the prescribed workplace standard. Workplace standards are conservative and they are safe concentrations set for persons to breathe 8 hours per day, 5 days per week, 52 weeks per year.

Previously released radiological data released by the Joint Assessment Group involving NMED, DOE, and EPA did not show significant increases in alpha, beta or gamma radiation resulting from the fires on the Los Alamos National Laboratory property. The tests indicate slightly increased levels of alpha radiation, consistent with forest fire smoke. Gamma radiation levels in Northern New Mexico appear normal. For up-to-the-minute gamma radiation data, visit newncct.lanl.gov.

All available monitoring data, environment and health information will be available from www.nmcnv.state.nm.us.

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US Forest Service	Los Alamos National Laboratory	Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Indian Affairs	Environmental Protection Agency	Small Business Administration
New Mexico National Guard	New Mexico County Agencies	American Red Cross

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEMA-DR-1329-NM-PR51
May 19, 2000

Media Contact: FIRE INFORMATION: 505-753-2032
FEMA/STATE: 505-753-2870
Nathan Wade Pager: 505-827-2836

LOS ALAMOS ASBESTOS SAMPLING COMPLETE

SANTA FE, NM - The New Mexico Environment Department has collected air samples in the burned areas of Los Alamos and analyzed them for asbestos. The highest asbestos concentration found was only 10 percent of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) asbestos limit.

The highest concentration was 0.013 fibers per cubic centimeter. This sample was collected near the intersection of Arizona and 36th. The OSHA permissible exposure limit is .1 fiber per cubic centimeter.

Background asbestos levels around Los Alamos, collected from the University of New Mexico-Los Alamos, is .0025 fibers per cubic centimeter.

Surface wipe samples have been taken in 11 homes in the burned area and all of these were negative for asbestos. Wipe samples were also taken from inside and outside surfaces of the Mountain Elementary School. The school samples were negative for asbestos containing material.

State and Federal agencies plan no additional tests for asbestos.

Homeowners who want asbestos inventories of their homes will have to pay for those tests either themselves or through their insurance company.

The asbestos sample results are available at www.dncenr.state.nm.us.

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Health Risk Evaluation on the First Set of Chemical Data.
From the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
—Sister Agency of the Center For Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta

Richard Franklin, On-Scene Coordinator

Table with 2 columns: Post-it* Fax Note (7671) and # of pages. Rows include To (James Straka), From (D. Gray), Co./Dept (DOE), Co., Phone #, and Fax # (8271544).





mia2@cdc.gov
05/19/00 02:47 PM

To: Althea Foster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Patrick Young/R6/USEPA/US@EPA
cc: ran2@cdc.gov, sro1@cdc.gov, raz8@cdc.gov, dmb4@cdc.gov
Subject: RE: Los Alamos Fires, Health risk

We have reviewed the following data:

May 12, metals, volatiles, PAH, and pesticide data

May 13, metals, volatiles, PAH, and pesticide data

May 14, metals data

Particulate matter concentration May 4 - May 19

We had previously reviewed only the May 14 metals data and the particulate data. Our statements about them remain unchanged and are reiterated below.

Metals:

Metals were below detection levels on May 12 and May 13. The metals levels detected on May 14 are low and unlikely to pose a threat to health. The metals would be naturally present in the soil and vegetation and would be in the smoke as a result of the burning vegetation. There is no evidence that any metal contamination in the smoke would be attributable to human hazardous waste handling activities.

Volatiles:

Volatile organic compounds were detected on May 12 and May 13. No volatiles data were reported for May 14. Relatively few compounds were detected in the smoke. The levels are low and would be unlikely to pose a threat to health. The concentrations are below those typically found in urbanized areas.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons:

PAH compounds were detected in smoke on May 12 and May 13. No PAH data were reported for May 14. PAHs are products of incomplete combustion and are typically found in smoke. The levels detected in smoke from the Los Alamos fire were low and unlikely to pose a threat to health.

Pesticides:

No pesticides were detected in smoke on May 12 or May 13. No pesticide data were reported for May 14.

Particulates:

The particulate data indicate that particulate matter remained below the EPA 150 microgram per cubic meter 24-hour standard for all but approximately



24-30 hours on May 12 and 13. Evacuations in the area likely prevented area residents from being exposed to the elevated particulate matters levels during the 12th and 13th. The NIOSH Recommended Exposure Level for air particulates, not otherwise specified, is 5 milligrams per cubic meter. The peak particulate levels did not exceed this level. Given the relatively short exposure periods, normal healthy individuals exposed to these levels would not be expected to experience adverse health effects. Persons with preexisting respiratory conditions such as asthma or emphysema, or persons with other breathing problems may have experienced breathing difficulties with exposure to the particulates. Anyone not experiencing breathing problems as a result of the acute exposure would not be expected to experience long-term health effects.

Summary:

Any smoke can be a respiratory irritant. The available data indicate that the smoke from the Los Alamos fires is generated from burning vegetation. There is no evidence that the chemicals in the smoke are attributable to human activities associated with hazardous waste handling activities. Although the levels of the reported chemicals detected in the smoke are low and not expected to cause adverse health effects, irritant gases in the smoke such as oxides of nitrogen, sulfur, and carbon and particulate matter, can cause breathing problems, especially in people with preexisting breathing problems such as asthma or emphysema. Normal healthy people would not be expected to experience long-term health effects as a result of exposure to the smoke. For healthy people, the smoke will cause nothing more than temporary irritation. Anyone experiencing smoke-related breathing problems is encouraged to see his or her doctor.

The above statements are based on the available monitoring data. Additional data may require ATSDR to change or modify its statements. The above statements also assume that the reported data will meet appropriate quality assurance and quality control criteria. The detection levels established for the reported chemicals appear to be appropriate.

Please call me if you have questions.

Mike

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FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEMA-DR-1329-NM-PR62
May 21, 2000

Media Contact: FIRE INFORMATION: 505-753-2032
FEMA/STATE: 505-753-2870

**Cerro Grande Fire
Chemical Contaminant Air Sampling Around
Los Alamos National Laboratory**

SANTA FE, NM – From May 12 to May 17, a joint air-sampling effort was conducted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), and the Department of Energy (DOE) to identify airborne pollutants as a result of the Cerro Grande fire.

Today, the evaluation of the second and third sets of chemical data is being announced. The evaluation was performed by EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. As in previous sample data, the air monitors show no evidence of toxic releases from Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Cerro Grande fire. These air monitors were specifically set to analyze for metals, total airborne particulates, and an array of chemical contaminants. The air quality monitors were established at six stations around and on the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) property. They were specifically looking for chemical contaminants in the air. The stations were designed to provide representative samples of breathing zone air. All of the air contaminants were measured in parts per billion (ppb), which is at extremely low levels. Twenty-one pesticides were specifically looked for in the analysis. No pesticides were found in any EPA samples.

Twenty-three metals were sought in the metals analysis. The concentrations of metals in the smoke are below levels of health concern and are not expected to cause adverse health effects. All metals analysis showed very low concentrations of suspended metals, well below accepted workplace concentrations. The metals in the smoke appear to be attributable to the burning vegetation, consistent with the fact that over 48,000 acres of coniferous forest have burned.

The results of volatile organic compound data (chemical contaminants) we reviewed in these new data sets are consistent with the data reviewed in previous sample data, and our conclusions are the same. Volatile organic compounds were detected on May 13, 14, 15 and 16. Given the very low concentrations of the volatile organic compounds, and the relatively short exposure period, the volatile organic compounds would be unlikely to pose a threat to health.

(more)

Chemical Contaminant air sampling 5/21/00/page 2

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