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## Laboratory responds to NMED final order

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LOS ALAMOS, N.M., Nov. 27, 2002 — In response to a final order issued Tuesday by the New Mexico Environment Department, officials at the U.S. Department of Energy's Los Alamos National Laboratory reaffirmed their commitment to environmental stewardship.

"The Laboratory continues to disagree with the order's finding of imminent and substantial endangerment," said Jim Holt, the Laboratory's associate director for Operations. "But we are not going to let that affect the Laboratory's efforts to clean up legacy contamination."

While the NMED order appears to focus more on continued study of contaminated areas and less on actual cleanup, the Laboratory will work with the New Mexico Environment Department to move forward with its commitment to the accelerated cleanup and risk reduction of contaminated areas at the Laboratory, none of which presents an imminent danger to people or the environment.

"As part of our ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship, the Laboratory believes it is more appropriate to use funding to clean up areas contaminated by Cold-War- and earlier operations than to focus those resources on duplicative studies," Holt said. "The Laboratory already has conducted numerous studies that have sufficiently characterized many of these sites. Many already have been fully remediated. It's time to go in and clean the rest of them up. We have a sound action plan in place

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for doing this and we intend to do it.”

Moreover, while the Laboratory is still reviewing the order, it appears that little has changed between the draft order and the final order released Tuesday. Therefore, the Laboratory is continuing with its challenges to the endangerment finding and regulatory authority issues, which were filed earlier in federal court.

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