

Sunday, March 16th 2003 Journal

LANL (General) (Perchlorate)

Reports Unfairly Target Laboratory

(Re: the Journal's March 8 story about the state environment departments views of Los Alamos National Laboratory.)

... I have come to the conclusion that the NMED is simply continuing an ongoing practice of targeting the laboratory. ...

NMED Secretary Ron Curry's quote in the article was telling ... He said "Due to our state's severe, and chronic drought, the lab's impact on our water resources has been magnified."

In my opinion, Secretary Curry is taking more than full advantage of the regional focus on water availability ... The only thing that has been "magnified" is the NMED's innovative sampling and analysis technique — evaporating a tap water sample to concentrate dissolved constituents, then using an analytical technique that has not been approved or adopted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates drinking water at the national level. The resulting 0.5 parts per billion perchlorate that was reported present in the Los Alamos water supply system was (arrived at using) this process of "magnification."

Secretary Curry said "... this department intends to do all that it can to inform the citizens of New Mexico whenever it receives validated information concerning toxic pollutants, especially in the water we need to drink and live." It is curious that (recently) a representative of the NMED

Drinking Water Bureau told an audience of Department of Energy, laboratory, and Los Alamos County employees that perchlorate was present in a drinking water system in Deming at levels of 16 parts per billion, and present in drinking water systems near Hobbs at four parts per billion. Yet when questioned he said the citizens in these communities have not been notified of the contamination, nor has any press release been issued.

Since the interim EPA guidance regarding perchlorate is that concentrations should not exceed 4 to 18 parts per billion in drinking water, I find it interesting that these higher concentrations in southern New Mexico are not newsworthy, yet the NMED goes out of its way to publicize 0.5 parts per billion in the Los Alamos water supply.

... Given the new administration of Gov. Bill Richardson, NMED has a renewed opportunity to practice fair and unbiased applications of its environmental (regulations). I would encourage Secretary Curry and his employees to put an end to the practice of targeting the Laboratory on environmental issues.

The political manipulations are transparent to this Santa Fean, and I'm bored with what is becoming a cottage industry for many ... who delight in anti-laboratory news coverage ... As a life-long resident, I am committed to environmental protection, but insist that it be provided in a scientifically credible, honorable, and equitable manner.

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