

General

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Los Alamos Nuclear Security Official Leaving

By John Arnold
Journal Staff Writer

The head of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos office has been reassigned. Ed Wilmot, the NNSA's site office manager in Los Alamos since April 2004, will leave next month to work on Complex 2030, the agency's long-term plan to overhaul the nation's nuclear weapons program, NNSA officials said Thursday.

NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy that maintains the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile and oversees national laboratories, including LANL.

Lab observers have been speculating since last week that Wilmot could be removed from his current post in the wake of security problems at LANL, including the recent discovery of classified documents in a drug raid at the home of a former lab subcontractor.

But NNSA spokeswoman Julianne Smith said on Thursday that Wilmot's reassignment is not related to security issues.

"He's one of our top senior managers and we need him to help as we gear up for the '08 budget and to help implement Complex 2030," Smith said by phone from Washington, D.C.

Wilmot's new assignment is effective Feb. 5, according to Bernie Pleau, an NNSA spokesman in Los Alamos. Dan Glenn, the current site office manager at DOE's Pantex Plant in Texas, will take Wilmot's position in Los Alamos on an acting basis, Pleau said.

Last week, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman fired Wilmot's boss, NNSA administrator Linton Brooks, because security concerns at LANL and other facilities haven't been adequately addressed.

In a statement issued Thursday, Sen. Pete Domenici, R-NM, said he has been dissatisfied "for some time" with NNSA and its lack of progress on security management.

"Therefore, I welcome a new appointment to manage (NNSA's Los Alamos office). Along with a new NNSA director, I hope we can turn the corner and make real progress on making our national labs, including Los Alamos, the safest and most productive installations in the country," Domenici said.

Pleau said that Thomas D'Agostino, NNSA's deputy administrator for defense programs and soon-to-be acting administrator, chose Wilmot for a new position in NNSA's Office of Transformation.

Wilmot will work in the agency's Albuquerque office and will help oversee the agency's ambitious plan to consolidate and modernize the nation's nuclear weapons complex.

Complex 2030 includes a new warhead design, known as the reliable replacement warhead, and a next-generation nuclear weapons factory.

Los Alamos is one of five sites NNSA is considering for that new facility.

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