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General

From: Stone, Marissa, NMENV
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February 6, 2007
For Immediate Release

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Environment Department Requests Public Input on Hazardous Waste Management at LANL

Department will Release Draft Permit this Summer

(Santa Fe, NM) – New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry announced today that NMED will release a new draft permit regulating hazardous waste management at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in August. The lab's current permit expired in 1999 but has been extended.

This permitting process will give residents an opportunity to comment on hazardous waste management processes at LANL and request hearings for the draft permit.

"This permit will complement the historic LANL Consent Order in ensuring that legacy waste is cleaned up at LANL and that ongoing lab operations are as clean and safe as possible," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. "I hope that by making this timeline and draft permit available as early as possible and by providing public forums, we will allow for maximum input from residents. New Mexicans deserve complete transparency and extensive involvement in the regulations that protect their water and health."

The permit addresses current hazardous waste management at the lab while the Consent Order governs the cleanup of past contamination at LANL, including groundwater, Area G and other waste sites.

The department will also include in the draft permit process a discussion of the hazardous waste management facilities no longer in use at LANL, including landfills and Area G. Area G, which has been operating since the 1950s, is the last landfill at the lab that accepts radioactive waste for permanent disposal. The permit will also cover LANL's storage and treatment of hazardous waste. Hazardous waste includes used solvents, metal bearing wastes, chemical waste, wastes mixed with radioactive waste and explosive waste generated from weapons development and testing.

The permit does not include LANL's management of radioactive waste, which by federal law is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Energy.

The Environment Department approved LANL's first 10-year permit to manage hazardous waste in 1989. That permit

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addressed the storage and treatment of hazardous waste at Technical Areas 16, 50, and 54. The new permit, which will be renewed for 10 years, will cover hazardous waste management at those areas. It will also govern hazardous waste management at TA-55, where plutonium is processed.

The Environment Department, which issued five enforcement actions against LANL in the past seven months, will continue to scrutinize cleanup activities at the lab under the Consent Order while the draft permit process is underway.

NMED issued Notices of Violation to the U.S. Department of Energy and Los Alamos National Security, LLC for failing to report chromium contamination in groundwater, practicing improper waste management related to a demolished building contaminated with hazardous waste and failing to adhere to an approved workplan that prohibited the disposal of cleanup waste at a municipal landfill. NMED also assessed stipulated penalties against DOE and LANS for failing to meet cleanup schedules at the incinerator ash pile site near the Los Alamos County Airport and for failing to adequately investigate the scope of contamination at one of LANL's old landfills.

Information on the draft permit will be available this summer at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/hwb/lanlperm.html>

For more information contact Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

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