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## Group: LANL lacks funds for waste cleanup

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Los Alamos National Laboratory

By ANDY LENDERMAN | The New Mexican  
May 31, 2007

The head of a citizen watchdog group says there's so little money being put into cleaning up hazardous and radioactive waste at Los Alamos National Laboratory that project managers won't be able to meet their cleanup schedules and will likely face more fines from the New Mexico Environment Department.

"In the near term, there is not sufficient funding to get the job done," said J.D. Campbell, who chairs the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board.

President Bush's budget request includes \$141 million for cleanup at Los Alamos in the 2008 fiscal year. But the lab needs \$283 million to stay on track, based on information presented to the advisory board, Campbell said.

The lab, the U.S. Department of Energy and the New Mexico Environment Department are bound by a consent order, or legal agreement, that governs cleanup of hazardous waste at the lab through 2015.

Lab officials have said the cost of the cleanup is estimated at \$1 billion. Campbell pointed to another lab estimate, calculated in 2007 dollars, of \$1.4 billion. But it's probably more than that, he said.

"The estimates on which that was based were relatively optimistic on what some of the cleanup requirements would be," Campbell said.

Plus, he said, "we continue to find more occurrences of contamination migrating from the sources."

In response, lab spokesman James Rickman said: "The laboratory recognizes the consent order as its guide to cleanup. We feel that we can meet all 2007 consent order requirements."

Several New Mexico lawmakers agreed more money is needed to take care of Cold War-era waste at the lab.

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"I think the administration hasn't asked for the amount of money that's required to do the cleanup that the state is demanding, and so that's an issue that I hope Congress can help with," U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., said in a recent interview.

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"It's bad when the administration doesn't put in the money to pay for something they've agreed to," U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said in an interview. "That just puts us behind the eight ball."

A call to U.S. Department of Energy headquarters was not immediately returned.

The chairman of a House subcommittee that pays for the Department of Energy budget has highlighted environmental cleanup as a priority.

"There is a tremendous legacy of contamination from the past 60 years of nuclear weapons manufacture and various canceled approaches to handling spent nuclear fuel," U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., said in a news release.

Visclosky chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development. He noted that cleanup of the former Rocky Flats pit manufacturing plant in Colorado has been completed

"Now is the time to make progress on cleaning up other communities," Visclosky said.

No specifics were provided in Visclosky's statement, but U.S. Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., expected to get details soon.

Udall, who is also a member of the House Appropriations Committee, said that he has talked with Visclosky and told him cleanup funding is important to New Mexico, and the environment department is trying to move forward with its consent order.

Environment Secretary Ron Curry recently expressed disappointment with how cleanup process is going.

"There is still no one who wants to take responsibility for the environmental package, environmental remediation and environmental cleanup at Los Alamos," Curry said.

*Contact Andy Lenderman at 995-3827 or [alenderman@sfnewmexican.com](mailto:alenderman@sfnewmexican.com).*



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