

# General

Lauren Ketcham, an advocate with the organization Environment New Mexico, said global warming is the most important reason the state should adopt the new rules.

"Scientists agree ... that it's real, and it's happening in New Mexico and that we ultimately need to be reducing our emissions by 80 percent by 2050 if we're going to avoid the worst effects," she said. "One of the easiest and quickest and best ways to begin moving in the right direction in addressing global warming is adopting clean car standards, which really create dramatic reductions in global warming emissions."

Another attendee was Daniel Lorimier of Sierra County, a conservation coordinator for the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. He said if New Mexico adopts the rules, already in place in some other states, it could prove to be the "tipping point" that prompts manufacturers to only produce clean-emissions cars. Now, companies often produce two models, a clean-emission version for states that have adopted the rules and another version for states that haven't.

A second forum is slated for today in Santa Fe.

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## LANL Cleanup Costs Pile Up

By John Fleck

Journal Staff Writer

Dealing with old buried Los Alamos National Laboratory waste could cost more than the \$114 million in current U.S. Department of Energy plans, according to a report by congressional investigators.

The plutonium-contaminated waste was buried in shallow pits and trenches from the lab's 1943 beginning until the early 1970s. The lab and DOE are looking at what needs to be done with it, said lab spokesman James Rickman.

For long-range planning purposes, DOE has assumed the waste could be safely left where it is, with a cap built over the old dumps to prevent the waste from washing away or seeping down to groundwater. That is the cheapest solution, with a \$114 million price tag, according to a report released Friday by the Government Accountability Office. But if a study under way concludes the waste must be dug up and sent to a safer disposal site, the cost could rise dramatically, according to the GAO.

The state Environment Department expects that at least some of the waste will need to be dug up, James Bearzi of the department's Hazardous Waste Bureau said Friday.

Rickman explained that the lab and its local DOE managers are reviewing an analysis of the risk posed by the waste and said it is too soon to say what cleanup approach might be needed.

The waste in question is contaminated with plutonium, a radioactive metal used in nuclear weapons. Since it was established in 1943 to build the first atomic bomb, Los Alamos has been a center of plutonium research.

Plutonium is dangerously radioactive. Since the early 1970s, plutonium waste was packaged and stored in drums for eventual disposal deep underground at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in southeast New Mexico.

Before the 1970s, the waste was simply dumped in pits and trenches and covered with dirt.

