

General



ENTERED
Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board
A U.S. Department of Energy Site-Specific Advisory Board
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August 1, 2011

Mr. Kevin Smith, Manager
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3747 West Jemez Road, MS A316
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Mr. George Rael,
Assistant Manager for Environmental Operations
Los Alamos Site Office
3747 West Jemez Road, MS A316
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Dear Messrs. Smith and Rael,

I am pleased to enclose Recommendations 2011-07, 2011-08 and 2011-09, adopted by the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board at its July 27th meeting held in Los Alamos.

Please call Lee Bishop or Edwin Worth, Co-DDFO's, or Menice Santistevan, Executive Director, if you have questions regarding these recommendations. We look forward to the response from the Department of Energy. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Ralph L. Phelps
Chair, NNM CAB

Enclosure: a/s
Cc w/encl:
U. S. Senator Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senator Tom Udall
U. S. Congressman Ben R. Lujan
Secretary F. David Martin, NMED
Melissa Nielson, DOE-HQ (via e-mail)
Catherine Brennan, DFO (via e-mail)
Lee Bishop, Co-DDFO
Ed Worth, Co-DDFO
John Kieling, NMED
Rich Mayer, EPA
Michael Graham, LANS
Simon Fet, USACE (via e-mail)
Menice B. Santistevan, Executive Director
CAB File

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**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD
Recommendation to the Department of Energy**

No. 2011-07

“Maximum Utilization of WIPP by Increasing MDA G TRU Shipments”

Drafted by the NNMCAB Executive Committee

Primary Author: Ralph Phelps

Background:

The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (NNMCAB or CAB) has recently become aware that planned shipments of Transuranic (TRU) Waste from such sites as the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) Site for 2011 have been curtailed. In a recent Recommendation (No. 2011-02, “Accelerate TRU Waste Shipments from Area G to WIPP”), the NNMCAB recommended that DOE consider accelerating the movement of TRU Waste from Material Disposal Area G (MDA-G).

Comments and Observations:

The EM Complex-Wide goal is to complete disposition of 90% of the legacy transuranic waste by the end of 2015. This goal directly supports the NMED-LANL Consent Order clean-up deadline of 2015.

Recommendation:

No. 1. DOE/HQ should provide resources and funding to LANL to allow the increase shipments of TRU Waste from MDA-G to WIPP to make up for the shortfall created from the reduction of shipments of TRU Waste.

Intent:

The intent of this recommendation is to ensure optimization of WIPP shipment schedules while helping to keep commitments to Consent Order milestones at MDA-G.

References:

1. NNMCAB Recommendation 2011-02, “Accelerate TRU Waste Shipments from Area G to WIPP”.
2. New Mexico Order on Consent, March 2005.
3. Office of EM Update – SSAB June 15, 2011, S. Olinger.
4. 2011 Spring National TRU Corporate Boards in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD
Recommendation to the Department of Energy**

No. 2011-08

**“Restore User Confidence in the Risk Analysis, Communication, Evaluation,
and Reduction (RACER) Database”**

**Drafted by the NNMCAB Executive Committee
Primary Authors: Ralph Phelps & Robert Gallegos**

Background:

The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (NNMCAB or CAB) has recently become aware of independent audit results for data provided by both Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to document samples taken and processed from the network of monitoring wells and surface water sources that are the baselines for environmental remediation work at LANL.

The results have indicated that a large number of sample data points in the Risk Analysis, Communication, Evaluation, and Reduction (RACER) database are inconsistent with source data or are missing from the database. This has been publicized as a lack of transparency to the public in the conduct of remediation corrective actions and decisions.

The NNMCAB has previously submitted Recommendation 2008-08, “Improve Documentation for Monitoring Wells Used for LANL Environmental Restoration and Cleanup of Legacy Wastes Consistent with Data Quality Objectives.” In Recommendation 2008-08, the NNMCAB recommended, that “DOE support and encourage LANL environmental restoration division management to promote better understanding among the CAB, NMED and independent reviewers of the way that LANL ensures data quality objectives are achieved in their groundwater monitoring program for the Material Disposal Areas (MDAs). This can be achieved through improved documentation, which provides the basis for specifying monitoring well design consistent with meeting required data quality objectives on a site-wide level.” The DOE has responded to this on March 25, 2009 by stating, “DOE continues supporting Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS) in improving documentation to communicate to the regulator and the public about the LANL groundwater monitoring program. The objectives for new wells that are being drilled are presented in Drilling Work Plans submitted to the NMED for approval prior to installation. A companion document is prepared that lays out the rationale for final well design and is based on field data collected as part of the drilling phase. These two documents provide the Data Quality Objective (DQO) basis and design approach to allow the understanding of the objectives and how they are being met.”

Comments and Observations:

According to the audit's findings, certain limited, environmental data were not provided to RACER in a timely manner. As a result NMED issued a Notice of Violation to LANL for violation of a 2007 Settlement Agreement and Stipulated Order. RACER was established to provide the public access to environmental data collected at LANL.

Recommendation:

No. 1. DOE should develop a response to the RACER audit that can be presented to the public that explains the issues with the RACER database, and defines the corrective actions to restore confidence in the information. This should include a clear description of the ground rules for data submission, and a description of the method for quality control of RACER data.

No. 2. DOE recommend RACER data include a reference to established state and federal standards.

Intent:

This recommendation will ensure restoration of public confidence in a database that has been presented as a reliable tool for the public to understand the status of samples from the LANL well and surface monitoring network.

References:

1. NNMCAB Recommendation 2008-08, "Improve Documentation for Monitoring Wells Used for LANL Environmental Restoration and Cleanup of Legacy Wastes Consistent with Data Quality Objectives.
2. DOE Response to Recommendation 2008-08, March 25, 2009.
3. RACER website, www.racernm.com.
4. NMED June 3, 2011 Notice of Violation

**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD
Recommendation to the Department of Energy**

No. 2011-09

“New Urgency for Increased TRU Shipments from MDA G”

Drafted by the NNMCAB Executive Committee

Primary Author: Ralph Phelps

Background:

The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (NNMCAB or CAB) has repeatedly tried to raise DOE concerns regarding the need to complete removal of the remaining TRU waste stored at Material Disposal Area G (MDA-G) at LANL. (Refer to Recommendations 2011-02 and 2011-07 DRAFT.) In 2000, Los Alamos town site, LANL and in particular, TA-54 were threatened by the Cerro Grande fire, which forced the evacuation of both Los Alamos and White Rock. One of the concerns at that time was that fire at TA-54, where MDA G is located, might release harmful radiation to the community.

Comments and Observations:

Once again, Los Alamos has been threatened by another massive fire, the Las Conchas fire, which has forced the evacuation of the Los Alamos town site, and has threatened LANL property. While White Rock has not been evacuated, the community is just a short distance from TA-54, and the same concerns regarding radiation effects are being expressed by the community. The efforts to fight this fire have been made the number one priority among firefighting activities in the country. The national news has broadcast the issue of fire-related radiation as a widespread concern, and continues to refer to TA-54 directly. This attention, in turn, has forced the LANL team into repeated explanations of protective measures and precautions taken to protect the community. The Governor has even directed the Environmental Department to institute augmented air monitoring to ensure any effects are identified. All this negative attention, and the costs associated with it, not to mention the perception of White Rock and neighboring residents of a real threat to their health, might have been avoided if at least the above ground portion of the TRU waste had been removed from MDA G and transported to WIPP.

Recommendation:

No. 1. DOE/HQ should immediately make completion of removal of the above ground TRU waste from MDA G the top environmental priority and provide the specific priority funding to LANL to allow shipments of this TRU Waste from MDA-G to WIPP at the fastest possible schedule.

Intent:

The intent of this recommendation is to provide confidence to the Northern New Mexico communities that DOE is responding to the need to protect their health and safety.

References:

1. NNMCAB Recommendation 2011-02, “Accelerate TRU Waste Shipments from Area G to WIPP”.
2. NNMCAB Recommendation 2011-07 DRAFT, “Maximum Utilization of WIPP by Increasing MDA G TRU Shipments”