



Department of Energy
 Field Office, Albuquerque
 Los Alamos Area Office
 Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

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CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. William Honker, Chief
 RCRA Permits Branch
 U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Region 6
 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200
 Dallas, TX 75202-2733

Dear Mr. Honker:

On August 25, 1992, visual contamination was noticed at a historical surface disposal area within Technical Area (TA) 3 at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). This area is listed in LANL's Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU) Report as SWMU Number 3-010, for which the Workplan will be submitted on or before May 23, 1993. The nature of this occurrence at this time appears to be the discovery of trace amounts of elemental mercury exposed by surface water runoff. Dave McInroy of LANL's Environmental Protection Group (EM-8) made a verbal notification of this discovery to Mr. Richard Mayer on the same day of the occurrence.

This area has been covered with plastic, bermed, and barricaded to keep the contamination from migrating to a nearby surface water course. Members of the Waste Site Studies Section of EM-8 have started characterization of this unit and the surrounding area to determine the extent and severity of the contamination. Based on the results, LANL will choose one of the following remedial options:

1. Permanently divert the surface water runoff, remove the exposed contamination and stabilize and cap the area until an appropriate RFI/CMS can be performed.
2. Perform an interim measure to remove this SWMU in its entirety. LANL would not proceed with this option unless an imminent health or environmental threat was discovered as a result of the sampling, or required to do so by another regulatory authority. It also should be noted that LANL would not proceed with this option until a remediation plan was submitted and approved by your office.

The Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendment (HSWA) provisions of our Resource Conservation and Recovery Act permit require submitting to your office a 15 day written notification of discovery of a new SWMU or newly discovered release from a SWMU. Although this visual contamination is within a previously identified SWMU, we are providing this information to keep you fully informed. Representatives of the New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau have inspected this area, and have indicated that because of concerns relating to mercury contamination in the state, this area may be considered a high priority.



Mr. William Honker

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Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Steve Slaten of my staff at (505) 665-5050.

Sincerely,



Joseph C. Vozella, Acting Chief
Environment, Safety and Health Branch

LESH:6SS-044

cc:

Peter Monahan, Surface Water
Quality Bureau, New Mexico
Environment Dept.,
1190 St. Francis Dr.,
Santa Fe, NM 87503
Benito Garcia, Hazardous and
Radioactive Materials Bureau,
New Mexico Environment Dept.,
1190 St. Francis Dr.,
Santa Fe, NM 87503
Kelly Bitner, ERPO, AL
Ted Taylor, ES&H, LAAO
Allen Tiedman, ADO, LANL, MS A120
Thomas Gunderson, EM-DO, LANL, MS K491
Ken Hargis, EM-8, (EM-8:92-2459-1),
LANL, MS K490
Robert Vocke, EM-13, LANL, MS M992
RPF, LANL, MS M707