

LANL HSWA FU 1 00 1071 703-010



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October 7, 1992

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Joseph Vozella, Acting Chief  
Environment, Safety and Health Branch  
Los Alamos Area Office  
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Dear Mr. Vozella,

On August 25, 1992 visual mercury contamination was observed exposed on the surface at SWMU 3-010 by representatives of the Surface Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). In a September 4 1992 letter to William Honker, EPA, from Joseph Vozella, DOE, the wording "trace amounts of elemental mercury" was used to describe the contamination at Solid Waste Management Unit (SWMU) 3-010. The Department is concerned about the use of the word "trace" to describe visible mercury contamination at this SWMU. Observable mercury is inconsistent with the use of "trace" to describe the contamination.

It was stated in a September 10, 1992 letter to Dave McInroy, EM-8 from Jim Piatt, Chief of the Surface Water Quality Bureau, that this SWMU is of high priority partly because of concerns relating to mercury contamination in the state. In fact, the Department's concerns about this SWMU go beyond those related to the state-wide mercury problem. Local spread of contamination from SWMUs is also of concern. This SWMU appears to be serving as a source of contamination rather than simply a disposal site.

The Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau (HRMB) staff have recently indicated to me that they support proposed actions outlined in the letter to Dave McInroy, although HRMB has RCRA jurisdiction primarily over the SWMU outfall, while the Surface Water Quality Bureau has authority over impacts to surface water.

The 1990 SWMU Report (IT Corp., 1990) states that sampling at the site has been undertaken, but that the results are unavailable. The Department would appreciate the opportunity to review the results of any previous or future sampling activities at the site. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Danny Katzman of my staff at 827-4313.

Sincerely,  
  
Kathleen M. Sisneros, Manager  
Water and Waste Management Division

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