

TA-73 AIRPORT LANDFILL DRAINAGES

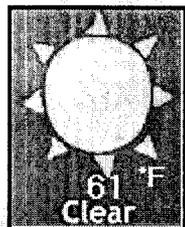


New Mexico Grasslands
by Ryannan Bryer de Hickman

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Sunday, April 27, 2003

State Orders Cleanup at Lab Landfill

By JEFF TOLLEFSON | The New Mexican

The New Mexico Environment Department issued a compliance order requiring Los Alamos National Laboratory to clean up hazardous materials in drainages at the airport landfill, state officials announced Friday.

The order also fines the lab \$167,475 for failing to clean up the site or submit an adequate cleanup plan, according to the Environment Department.

State officials say soils in the drainages contain elevated levels of various toxins, including cesium, plutonium, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and lead. The drainages also contain everything from empty 55-gallon drums to cars and scrap metal.

The drainages in question discharge into Pueblo Canyon and ultimately the Rio Grande.

The lab has been investigating the site since 1994, according to the state. The Environment Department says it began a collaborative effort with the lab to develop a clean-up plan, but the U.S. Department of Energy withdrew its support for that plan two years later.

"I hope that this order sends a strong signal that the days of repeated extensions, investigations that never end, and waste that is allowed to remain unaddressed, are over," Derrith Watchman-Moore, deputy secretary for the Environment Department, said in a prepared statement.

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The order requires the lab to remove debris from the landfill drainages by August 2003. The lab must also sample the soils after removal of the debris and then install erosion control systems.

Based on the results from the sampling and removal activities, the state might require additional cleanup at the site, according to the Environment Department.

Located on DOE property near the Los Alamos County Airport, the landfill accepted waste from the town as well as laboratory operations from 1943 to 1973.

Lab officials could not be reached for comment.

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