

SNL MWL

**Allen, Pam, NMENV**

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**From:** Stone, Marissa, NMENV  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 16, 2007 4:10 PM  
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By ASSOCIATED PRESS  
January 16, 2007

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) - An environmental group is complaining about work Sandia National Laboratories is doing to cover a toxic waste dump, but state Environment Department officials said Tuesday the work is allowed.

Citizen Action \_ which filed a court challenge seeking the waste's removal \_ contended Sandia has begun constructing a dirt and vegetation cover for the dump at Kirtland Air Force Base although the New Mexico Environment Department did not approve it.

James Bearzi, chief of the department's hazardous waste bureau, said the so-called subgrade work at Sandia was approved last September.

"It's a narrow aspect of the preparation for building the cover" that involves laying dirt to smooth over the landfill's surface to prevent water runoff, he said.

"We didn't get any public comments on this aspect of the plan one way or the other," Bearzi said. "We also didn't have any concerns."

Sandia officials have said the landfill doesn't contain enough waste to warrant a cleanup.

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The state rejected Sandia's overall plan last November because some parts needed clarification and others needed changing, Bearzi said. State officials currently are evaluating Sandia's responses, he said.

Environmental covers have proved to be effective, particularly in climates like New Mexico's, Bearzi said.

Sandia's current work does not impede its ability to monitor and do sampling at the site, said lab spokesman Will Keener.

Environment Secretary Ron Curry said the monitoring system is working.

"If groundwater or air were in danger of being contaminated by waste from the landfill, we would know about it," he said.

Citizen Action has had a challenge before the state Court of Appeals since 2005 against Curry's decision to leave toxic and radioactive waste in the landfill. The group contends the waste poses a danger to Albuquerque's water and air, and wants it removed.

### **State says Sandia lab allowed to do work on landfill, NM**

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) \_ An environmental group is complaining about Sandia National Laboratories' work to cover a toxic waste dump.

But state Environment Department officials say the work is allowed.

Citizen Action contends Sandia is constructing a dirt cover for the dump -- although the Environment Department didn't approve it.

But state hazardous waste bureau chief James Bearzi says the preliminary work Sandia is doing was approved

· last September.

He says the overall plan was rejected because it needed modifications.

Bearzi says the state is evaluating Sandia's comments.

Citizen Action has filed a court challenge seeking the waste's removal.

**Marissa Stone**  
**Communications Director**  
**New Mexico Environment Department**  
( 505) 827.0314 ( o )  
( 505) 231.0475 ( c )