

Allen, Pam, NMENV

SNL MWL 07

From: Dave McCoy [dave@radfreenm.org]

Sent: Thursday, September 20, 2007 1:53 PM

To: dave@radfreenm.org

Subject: FW: Protective Berms Breached by Rainfall at Sandia Lab's Mixed Waste Landfill

P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 20, 2007

Contact Citizen Action: (505) 262-1862

Dave McCoy

dave@radfreenm.org

Storm Waters Breach Protective Berms at Sandia Lab's Mixed Waste Landfill

Documents obtained under a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the public interest group Citizen Action New Mexico state that rainfall events that took place at Sandia National Laboratories' Mixed Waste Landfill (MWL) during the period from late June 2006 through July 2007 breached protective berms installed around the MWL.

The berms were supposed to prevent storm water from flowing across the dump site that contains over 700,000 cu ft of hazardous and radioactive wastes that lie in shallow unlined pits and trenches above Albuquerque's sole source drinking water aquifer. The breaching of the berms is evidence that the rain events were carrying storm water across the dump for many decades, and possibly to the ground water below. The berms should have prevented that, but instead the storm water flow was so aggressive that it was not prevented.

Sandia allowed storm water to flow across radioactive and hazardous wastes in the dump for nearly half a century. The berms were installed in 2006 to protect against storm water run-off going across the MWL during the construction of a oil cover at the dump.

Ten to fifteen feet of both the both the eastern and western berms at the dump were breached by rain water from a single storm event in August, 2006, flowing across the site. Three breaches were present on the west berm. This allowed sediments and water to flow to the west off of the dump site. The reports also showed that on numerous occasions, ponds formed above the buried wastes in the shallow, unlined pits and trenches. Sandia's design criteria for the berms was not effective to prevent the severe ponding, breach of the berms and the movement of the storm water into the buried wastes. The documents indicate the berms had been previously breached and repaired.

In the past Citizen Action notified the EPA, DOE and NMED about the lack of protection against storm water run-off and lack of analysis for possible soil sediment contaminants that flow toward the west. The planned 35,000 home residential development of Mesa Del Sol lies only a mile away from dump to the west of the dump.

Robert Gilkeson, a registered geologist stated, "The ponding that is now on record as occurring this year has occurred repeatedly over many past decades while the dump was operating and after disposal stopped in 1988. The ponding is a way for contaminants to be carried from beneath the dump into the groundwater.

Dave McCoy, Director of Citizen Action said, "The MWL has never had an adequate monitoring network to detect any contamination moving beneath the dump. This is a warning that storms and wind erosion will eventually destroy the thin silt cover placed across the dump releasing contaminants that can remain dangerous for 100,000 years."

For more information contact: Dave McCoy 505 262-1862

9/20/2007

This inbound email has been scanned by the MessageLabs Email Security System.

No virus found in this outgoing message.

Checked by AVG Free Edition.

Version: 7.5.487 / Virus Database: 269.13.27/1020 - Release Date: 9/20/2007 12:07 PM

No virus found in this outgoing message.

Checked by AVG Free Edition.

Version: 7.5.487 / Virus Database: 269.13.27/1020 - Release Date: 9/20/2007 12:07 PM