



Department of Energy

Field Office, Albuquerque
Los Alamos Area Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

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Ms. Judith Espinoza, Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive
P. O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Ms. Espinoza:

In your letter to me dated November 18, 1993, you expressed concerns about changes in testing procedures for radioactive wastes in Department of Energy (DOE) laboratories rather than underground at DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The purpose of this letter is to respond to your concerns.

DOE's Carlsbad Area Office (CAO) (formerly the WIPP Project Integration Office) has solicited information from several laboratory facilities within the DOE complex regarding their interests in, and capability for, performing Enhanced Laboratory Program With Selected Actual Transuranic Waste (ELPSAT) tests in support of WIPP. CAO will first screen the candidate facilities based on the responses they provide, and eliminate those which, in their judgement, do not have the capability to perform the experiments.

The remaining facilities will receive a Request-For-Proposals (RFP) to perform the experiments. Prior to developing an RFP for this work, DOE must finalize the technical criteria for the experiments. CAO will then establish a committee to develop site selection criteria and evaluate proposals from the candidates. To my knowledge, DOE has not completed either of these steps and I am not aware of any schedule that has been established to do so.

The Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has indicated to CAO that it is interested in conducting ELPSAT testing. It is, however, premature for DOE and LANL to begin a dialogue with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) on this proposed experiment as we have no details on which to base discussions.

As soon as we receive the RFP and determine the relevance of conducting the experiments envisioned, the availability of facilities, and/or need for new facilities, we will immediately contact NMED to assist us with identifying issues

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Ms. Judith Espinoza

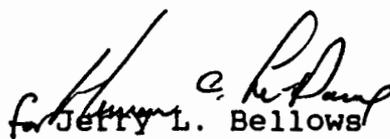
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FEB 08 1994

of concern and permit requirements. We look forward to working with NMED to establish mutually agreeable schedules for permit submittal and review. These would also address NMED technical concerns regarding these experiments. Much of this is, of course, contingent on LANL being selected by CAO to perform the work. One possible advantage to LANL being selected to perform this work would be the establishment of multiple-use facilities that could potentially support the Environmental Restoration and Waste Management Programs.

Should you have any questions on this issue, please contact me at 667-5105, or Joseph C. Vozella of my staff at 665-5027.

Sincerely,


Jerry L. Bellows
Area Manager

LESH:4JM-010

cc:

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