

**SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR**David Martin, *Cabinet Secretary*Raj Solomon, P.E., *Deputy Secretary***NEWS RELEASE****July 14, 2011**

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**Environment Department Issues Compliance Order  
to Lovelace Health System, Inc.**

**Santa Fe, NM** – On July 12, 2011, the New Mexico Environment Department (“NMED”) issued an Administrative Compliance Order (“Order”) assessing a \$14,250 penalty to the Lovelace Health System, which operates the Lovelace Medical Center in Albuquerque. The Order alleges the improper disposal of infectious waste from the Lovelace Medical Center at Albuquerque’s Cerro Colorado Landfill – a solid waste facility not permitted to accept infectious waste.

The improperly-disposed infectious waste was discovered during a waste screening inspection at the landfill on April 28, 2011. The load of solid waste from the Lovelace Medical Center included two separate plastic bags containing infectious waste. The first bag was a red, bio-hazard labeled bag containing two blood (plasma) bags and tubing. The second bag was a clear, unlabeled bag that was splattered on the interior with blood or bloody liquid. This bag contained a suction canister (hemoglobin filter) and two patient or surgical drapes that were saturated or contaminated with blood or bloody liquid.

Infectious waste (also known as “regulated medical waste”) is specifically prohibited from landfill disposal by the Solid Waste Act and the New Mexico Solid Waste Rules. It is a special waste with unique handling, transportation, treatment and disposal requirements to assure that it does not come into contact with persons in a manner that could spread disease.

The Lovelace Medical Center was previously cited for the improper disposal of infectious waste, including bio-hazard labeled specimen bags holding human blood samples, at the Cerro Colorado Landfill on April 17, 2008. The NMED subsequently issued an Order compelling compliance and assessing a \$21,500 civil penalty. This enforcement action resulted in the medical center’s submission of a revised Infectious Waste Management Plan and payment of the civil penalty.

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