



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax (505) 827-2836



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

DERRITH WATCHMAN-MOORE
DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 30, 2004
Immediate Release

Contact: Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Dir.
Phone: (505) 827-0314

Environment Department Settles Radiation Violations with Albuquerque Research Facility; Company to Pay \$135,000 Penalty

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has entered into a settlement agreement with North Star Research Corporation, operator of a scientific research facility in Albuquerque, to resolve North Star's alleged violations of the New Mexico Radiation Protection Act. The terms of the settlement include payment of a civil penalty of \$135,000 over a three-year period. These monies will go to the State of New Mexico General Fund where they will be used for state programs including environmental enforcement.

The research conducted by North Star at its facility involves radiation equipment, primarily particle accelerators. This enforcement action stems from an inspection of North Star by NMED personnel in January of 2000, during which numerous violations of at least 18 separate provisions of the Radiation Protection Act and Regulations were found. These violations included North Star's failure to register the particle accelerator, failure to adequately monitor the radiation area and employees operating the machine, failure to install safety switches and alarms, and failure to maintain operators manuals at the control panel.

One result of North Star's failure to comply with these regulations was that a North Star employee received many times the allowable annual radiation dose to both hands. This exposure caused burns, diminished function, and also put the employee at an increased risk for cancer.

"This settlement should send a strong message that NMED takes these radiation regulations and worker safety very seriously," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry.

NMED's Radiation Control Bureau issues licenses for users of radioactive materials and registrations for users of radiation producing machines such as x-rays and particle accelerators. The Radiation Protection Regulations are intended to provide safe working conditions for those employed by licensees or registrants as well as to protect the public health, safety and the environment.

Since this inspection, North Star has taken steps to correct these violations.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

###