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## **Environment Department Signs \$342,560 Loan Agreement with Town of Silver City for Asbestos Clean Up at old Hillcrest Hospital**

(Santa Fe, NM) –The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) approved a \$342,560 loan for the Town of Silver City that the town will use to clean up asbestos at the former Hillcrest Hospital.

The loan, which NMED Secretary approved Oct. 19, is financed through NMED's Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund. This fund allows NMED to provide low interest loans to public, nonprofit and private entities for environmental clean up efforts. This is the first time NMED issued such a loan, which is funded through a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency program.

"It's gratifying that we can offer low interest loans like this to help clean up contamination at blighted properties," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. "We are proud to partner with a responsible town like Silver City to help return an old site to a functioning facility that will benefit the town."

The former Hillcrest Hospital, at 1600 Pope St., is contaminated with asbestos containing materials, lead-based paint and pigeon droppings that accumulated since the hospital moved to a new facility in 1981.

Town managers, who acquired the deteriorated building in 2004, plan to demolish the structure after the contaminants are removed. Federal air quality regulations require that asbestos containing materials be removed from buildings that are demolished in order that asbestos particulates do not become airborne and have the potential to contaminate neighboring properties.

EPA provides funding through the loan program for abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial or commercial facilities or property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

The five-year loan allows financing with a 20 percent repayment discount at zero percent interest. NMED received the authority to administer the BCRLF program during the 2006 state Legislative session. Silver City is leveraging the loan with a \$100,000 appropriation from the state Legislature designated for the removal of hazardous wastes from the site. The town also received a \$100,000 appropriation from the legislature for the demolition of the building following remediation.

For more information, call NMED Communications Director Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

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