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Environment Department Reaches \$144,835 Settlement with Kirtland Air Force Base over Hazardous Waste Violations

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department reached a settlement agreement with the U.S. Air Force for \$144,835 to resolve 14 hazardous waste violations at Kirtland Air Force Base near Albuquerque.

The department found several violations at the facility during an inspection conducted between September 23 and October 2, 2003. Violations included failure identify all underlying hazardous constituents in waste that was shipped from the base to an incinerator out of state.

“The characterization of waste is an important part of careful hazardous waste management because it ensures waste treatment and disposal facilities handle only wastes they can safely manage. That protects the health and safety of workers and nearby residents,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “The settlement requires Kirtland to train employees to properly manage and characterize all hazardous wastes generated at the base.”

Department inspectors found some waste from Kirtland contained heavy metals and chlorinated solvents that were shipped to the ENSCO hazardous waste incinerator in El Dorado, Arkansas. The burning process can create dioxin, which is a carcinogen.

Other violations at Kirtland included failure to properly manage lamps containing mercury, failure to remove combustible material within a certain distance from a permitted open burn unit and failure to maintain personnel training records at the permitted open detonation treatment unit.

Kirtland generates, stores and treats various wastes during the maintenance of military airplanes and other equipment. Those wastes include spent solvents, waste jet fuel, parts washer sludge, paint wastes and explosive materials.

The Department, which alleged Kirtland violated its state Hazardous Waste Permit and Hazardous Waste Management Regulations, issued three Compliance Orders to Kirtland on May 25, 2005. The settlement requires Kirtland to pay the civil penalty and train employees to properly manage and characterize hazardous waste.

Money from the settlement will be deposited into NMED’s Hazardous Waste Emergency Fund, which pays for the cleanup of hazardous substance spills and hazardous waste emergencies.

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

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