



**GARY E. JOHNSON**  
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*

*www.nmenv.state.nm.us*



**PETER MAGGIORE**  
SECRETARY

For Immediate Release  
May 2, 2002

Contact: James Bearzi, Chief, Hazardous Waste Bureau

Phone: (505) 428-2512

Contact: Cathy Tyson, Communications Director

Phone: (505) 827-2855

**State Environment Department Orders Comprehensive Investigation and  
Cleanup of Contamination at Los Alamos National Laboratory**

(Santa Fe, NM) –Today the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) issued a draft order to Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) requiring a comprehensive investigation and cleanup of contaminated sites at LANL. The draft order addresses all significant environmental cleanup issues at LANL, including hundreds of contaminated sites, landfills, and surface and ground water. It marks the first time the state has set strict schedules for LANL’s environmental cleanup work, and will help ensure appropriate prioritization of environmental activities by LANL and the Department of Energy (DOE).

“Today signals the end of the way we have typically regulated New Mexico’s federal facilities,” said Environment Department Secretary Peter Maggiore. “We have found that New Mexico’s federal facilities have fallen far behind those in other states when it comes to environmental funding. The draft order we issued today requires LANL to accelerate its cleanup activities and direct more funding to environmental efforts than we’ve seen in the past. It will also help to raise the priority of LANL’s environmental funding requirements to those in Washington who annually allocate DOE monies. The draft order is really about getting to ‘done’ in a more timely manner.”

- more -

The NMED's draft order is based on a finding that past or present handling, storage, treatment and/or disposal of solid or hazardous wastes at LANL may substantially endanger health and the environment. The finding is exacerbated by the delays associated with completing investigations and implementing cleanups. This finding is based on an exhaustive review of reports submitted by LANL, and on the documentation of past waste disposal practices at LANL, including analytical data from soil, sediment, and surface and ground water.

LANL is a United States Department of Energy-owned, contractor-operated research facility in operation since the early 1940's. Throughout its history, LANL has conducted experimental research and development in the fields of nuclear weapons and explosive materials. From approximately 1943 to the present, various hazardous and mixed radioactive wastes have been generated, stored, treated, and disposed at LANL. Hazardous and solid wastes that have been handled and disposed include chlorinated and non-chlorinated solvents, high explosives, metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides, perchlorate, nitrates, and radionuclides.

The NMED is issuing the draft order under the State Hazardous Waste Act to compel LANL to address the possible health and environmental effects of its past and present operations. The draft order contains investigation and cleanup requirements, including a schedule for implementation, for contaminated sites at LANL. Known areas of contamination including former and current landfills used for disposal of solid and hazardous wastes (including waste mixed with radioactive contamination), and ground and surface water at the approximately 43 square mile facility are addressed in the draft order. Procedures for accelerating the assessment of the extent of contamination at newly discovered sites are also outlined in the draft order.

Press Release-LANL Order  
May 2, 2002  
Page 3

The NMED is inviting the public to submit written comment on the draft order during a sixty-day public-comment period that starts today. NMED will issue the final order after considering all written comments. Both the draft order and the administrative record may be reviewed at the NMED Hazardous Waste Bureau located at 2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-6303. Procedures for submitting written comments and a copy of the draft order are also available at the NMED website:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/HWB/pubnotice.html>.

Written comments will be accepted until **5 p.m., July 1, 2002.**

For additional information, please contact James Bearzi, Chief, NMED Hazardous Waste Bureau, at (505) 428-2512, or Cathy Tyson, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.

###