



Bill Richardson
Governor

**NEW MEXICO
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

Office of the Secretary

Harold Runnels Building
1190 Saint Francis Drive (87505)
PO Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM 87502
Phone (505) 827-2855 Fax (505) 827-2836
www.nmenv.state.nm.us



Ron Curry
Secretary
Jon Goldstein
Deputy Secretary

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Contact: Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director
(505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

Environment Department Issues Compliance Order with Penalty of \$51,250 to Los Alamos Medical Center for Infectious Medical Waste Violations

(Santa Fe, NM) The New Mexico Environment Department issued an administrative compliance order with a proposed penalty of \$51,250 to the Los Alamos Medical Center for violating state Solid Waste Management Regulations by disposing of infectious waste at a local landfill.

The violations stem from waste screening inspections that determined the hospital disposed of infectious waste -- including two human placentas with attached umbilical cords, vials of blood and needles -- at Los Alamos County Landfill in 2006 and 2007.

"The state's solid waste rules are intended to protect the public and workers at solid waste facilities from the effects of potentially harmful and infectious materials," said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. "Los Alamos Medical Center's failure to properly manage its infectious is disconcerting and represents a breakdown of necessary operational procedures."

The department's Solid Waste Bureau determined during three waste screening inspections between October and December 2006 and in January 2007 that three truckloads from the hospital contained infectious waste. That waste, which was contaminated or saturated with blood or bloody liquids, also included gauze, bedding, plastic tubing and a vacuum pump.

The Solid Waste Act and New Mexico Solid Waste Rules bar the hospital from disposing of infectious waste at a landfill. Infectious waste requires treatment or incineration to render it noninfectious before it can be disposed at a landfill.

The hospital, which has 30 days to respond to the order, may request a public hearing. The order requires the hospital to properly manage and dispose of its infectious waste and pay the civil penalty.

For more information call Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314.

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