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Environment Secretary Issues Permit for Long-term Monitoring of Sandia National Laboratories' Chemical Waste Landfill

(Santa Fe, NM) – New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry issued a permit today that governs long-term monitoring and maintenance of an excavated landfill at Sandia National Laboratories.

The permit imposes groundwater and vapor monitoring requirements on Sandia Corp. and the U.S. Department of Energy to ensure residual contaminants that may remain at the Chemical Waste Landfill do not endanger human health and the environment.

“We’re pleased that Sandia took actions at the landfill to protect the groundwater from what contamination remains,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “This permit ensures that an effective monitoring network will be in place for years to come to provide early detection of any contamination that may escape.”

Sandia operated the landfill from 1962 to 1981 for the disposal of a wide variety of chemical and hazardous wastes, including acids, oxidizers, solvents, organics, reactives, metals and nonhazardous solid wastes. The landfill was also used as a hazardous waste storage unit from 1981 to 1989. After chemicals such as TCE, exceeded state groundwater standards beneath the landfill in 1990, NMED required Sandia to excavate the contents, implement cleanup measures to remove the source of contamination, and install a protective cover. Those measures have proven effective and TCE levels are now below state groundwater standards. The permit establishes the monitoring regimen for groundwater and soil vapor, and the maintenance requirements for the cover.

Sandia and a number of individuals and groups that participated in department-led negotiations, which began in August 2008, agreed to the terms of the permit. “The department’s negotiating team worked hard to address both citizen and Sandia’s concerns with the draft permit,” added Curry. “The fact that all parties agreed to the permit’s terms shows that negotiations can work and achieve a satisfactory outcome for all.”

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