



NEWS RELEASE **For Immediate Release**

September 26, 2025

Contact: Drew Goretzka, Director of Communications
New Mexico Environment Department
505.670.8911 | drew.goretzka@env.nm.gov

The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

LANL, NNSA complete tritium waste container treatment

SANTA FE — Los Alamos National Laboratory and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) informed the New Mexico Environment Department that they have completed treatment of four flanged tritium waste containers.

NNSA stated no significant emissions were released during the treatment process. NNSA monitored the total emissions to be around 0.005 millirems. For comparison, the exposure an individual receives during a round-trip cross-country flight is approximately 3.7 millirems.

NMED staff performed on-site air monitoring during all treatment events and will publish its own data after verification, taking around 30 days.

“The New Mexico Environment Department conducted oversight of the treatment process assuring the National Nuclear Security Administration followed state requirements,” said **Rick Shean, Resource Protection Division Director for the Environment Department**. “Our oversight work is far from over. NNSA’s final report, which will include monitoring data, is an important step in maintaining scientific transparency, public accountability, and compliance with state rules.”

Background and Operations Recap

The four containers — containing the radioactive isotope tritium and lead — were originally packaged at LANL’s Weapons Engineering Treatment Facility (WETF) in 2007. These four containers were later designated as mixed waste and stored on the outskirts of LANL’s property instead of being treated at the time the waste was generated.

In June 2019, NNSA requested a temporary authorization to depressurize the containers on-site, as the possibility of said pressure prevented the containers from being transported to a final disposal site.

NMED issued a temporary authorization permitting NNSA to depressurize the four containers at Technical Area 54 (TA-54) on Sept. 4, 2025, after LANL and NNSA completed multiple additional requirements placed on them by the Department in June 2025.

Depressurization of the containers began on Sept. 16 and ended on Sept. 23. The schedule of treatment operations, which were monitored by NMED and the Environmental Protection Agency, was as follows:

- Sept. 16 – The first flanged tritium waste container was depressurized, finding zero pressure in the container headspace.
- Sept. 20 – The second container was depressurized, finding zero pressure in the container headspace
- Sept. 21 – The third container was depressurized, finding zero pressure in the container headspace
- Sept. 23 – The fourth container was depressurized, finding zero pressure in the container headspace

According to NNSA, all four containers contained no measurable pressure, indicating there was no pressure buildup from tritium in the container headspace.

NNSA is required to issue a public final report outlining the treatment operations within 30 days of completing the treatment process, including emission data collected during depressurization.

NMED received over 50 constituent inquiries during the treatment process, many of which criticized LANL and NNSA for a lack of transparency and real-time information. As part of its temporary authorization, LANL and NNSA are required to hold a public meeting within 30 days of treatment operations concluding.

###

NMED does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in the administration of its programs or activities, as required by applicable laws and regulations. NMED is responsible for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning non-discrimination requirements implemented by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. If you have any questions about this notice or any of NMED's non-discrimination programs, policies or procedures, you may contact: Kate Cardenas, Non-Discrimination Coordinator | NMED | 1190 St. Francis Dr., Suite N4050 | P.O. Box 5469 | Santa Fe, NM 87502 or (505) 827-2855 or nd.coordinator@env.nm.gov. If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a NMED program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator.

###