



## **NEWS RELEASE** **For Immediate Release**

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*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.*

### **NMED bolsters public comment protections** *Change comes amid recent fraudulent submissions*

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department this week implemented a key change to its [public comment portal](#) to protect members of the public from any fraudulent use of their name in support or opposition of NMED actions.

Starting today, anyone who submits a public comment with an email address will receive an automated confirmation email acknowledging that NMED received the comment. The email then gives recipients the opportunity to confirm their comment or notify the Department if they did not submit or authorize the comment.

NMED implemented the change after complaints that comments had been submitted without the knowledge or consent of the people identified as the commenters during the public hearing determination process for Yucca Growth Infrastructure, LLC's air quality permit application, otherwise known as Project Jupiter. The affected individuals included public officials.

The new process will allow individuals to quickly identify and report potentially fraudulent comments while preserving a simple and accessible process for legitimate public participation.

To date, individuals have notified NMED that approximately 42 of the more than 17,500 comments submitted through the Department's public comment portal on the Yucca Growth Infrastructure air permit application may have been fraudulent.

Under NMED's new process, the individuals associated with those comments would have received immediate confirmation emails and could have promptly notified NMED that they did not authorize the submissions.

NMED provided the New Mexico Department of Justice with information from its public comment portal to support the investigation into individuals or organizations that may have misused the public comment process for Yucca Growth Infrastructure's air quality permit.

Depending on the investigation's findings, NMED may pursue appropriate civil or criminal action against those responsible.

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