



DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
National Nuclear Security Administration
Los Alamos Site Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544



JUL 24 2012

Mr. Ralph L. Phelps, Chairman
Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board
94 Cities of Gold Road
Santa Fe, NM 87506

Dear Mr. Phelps:

Subject: Department of Energy's response to the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board Recommendation No. 2011-09 "New Urgency for Increased Transuranic Shipments from Material Area G"

The Los Alamos Site Office agrees that last year's Las Conchas fire increased recognition of the importance of removing the transuranic (TRU) waste stored above ground at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

The Los Alamos Site Office believes this recommendation has been addressed in the January 5, 2012 Framework Agreement between the Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) and the New Mexico Environment Department, which reprioritized environmental cleanup activities and made removal of this waste a primary goal. The Governor of New Mexico has stated that removal of this waste is one of the state's highest environmental priorities.

In response, LANL has accelerated shipments of above-ground TRU waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The deadline for removal of the 3,706 cubic meters of waste is June 30, 2014. LANL is currently ahead of schedule with TRU shipments planned in Fiscal Year 2012 and is on track to achieve a fourth record year for the number of shipments to WIPP.

Peter Maggiore
Assistant Manager
Environmental Projects Office

Enclosure: Recommendation No. 2011-09

cc:

M. Bishop, EPO, LASO

E. Worth, EPO, LASO

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M. Graham, ADEP, LANS, MS-M991

Records Center, LASO

Official Contract File, LASO

EPO-32EW-254-452221

**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO CITIZENS' ADVISORY BOARD
Recommendation to the Department of Energy**

No. 2011-09

“New Urgency for Increased TRU Shipments from MDA G”

Drafted by the NNMCAB Executive Committee

Primary Author: Ralph Phelps

Background:

The Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board (NNMCAB or CAB) has repeatedly tried to raise DOE concerns regarding the need to complete removal of the remaining TRU waste stored at Material Disposal Area G (MDA-G) at LANL. (Refer to Recommendations 2011-02 and 2011-07 DRAFT.) In 2000, Los Alamos town site, LANL and in particular, TA-54 were threatened by the Cerro Grande fire, which forced the evacuation of both Los Alamos and White Rock. One of the concerns at that time was that fire at TA-54, where MDA G is located, might release harmful radiation to the community.

Comments and Observations:

Once again, Los Alamos has been threatened by another massive fire, the Las Conchas fire, which has forced the evacuation of the Los Alamos town site, and has threatened LANL property. While White Rock has not been evacuated, the community is just a short distance from TA-54, and the same concerns regarding radiation effects are being expressed by the community. The efforts to fight this fire have been made the number one priority among firefighting activities in the country. The national news has broadcast the issue of fire-related radiation as a widespread concern, and continues to refer to TA-54 directly. This attention, in turn, has forced the LANL team into repeated explanations of protective measures and precautions taken to protect the community. The Governor has even directed the Environmental Department to institute augmented air monitoring to ensure any effects are identified. All this negative attention, and the costs associated with it, not to mention the perception of White Rock and neighboring residents of a real threat to their health, might have been avoided if at least the above ground portion of the TRU waste had been removed from MDA G and transported to WIPP.

Recommendation:

No. 1. DOE/HQ should immediately make completion of removal of the above ground TRU waste from MDA G the top environmental priority and provide the specific priority funding to LANL to allow shipments of this TRU Waste from MDA-G to WIPP at the fastest possible schedule.

Intent:

The intent of this recommendation is to provide confidence to the Northern New Mexico communities that DOE is responding to the need to protect their health and safety.

References:

1. NNMCAB Recommendation 2011-02, “Accelerate TRU Waste Shipments from Area G to WIPP”.
2. NNMCAB Recommendation 2011-07 DRAFT, “Maximum Utilization of WIPP by Increasing MDA G TRU Shipments”