



Statement to NMED re: LANL RCRA Open Burn Permit Application

Robert B. Gibson

23 April 2010

Your Honor:

I have lived in Los Alamos for 31 years and hope to do so for many more. Hence, I have as much interest as anyone in the safety of the people and environment of this community and region.

I am presently serving my eighth year on the Los Alamos County Council, the governing body of our community, and have worked on various health, economic, transportation, environmental, governmental, and other civic issues locally, in the North Central NM region, and throughout the state for nearly 20 years. The statement of the Council is being provided separately. I speak here as an individual.

The mission of the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is to provide science to support national security needs as identified by the President and the Congress. Several of those pursuits result in explosive material wastes which must be treated.

The largest present contributor to that waste stream results from the need to understand the constantly evolving Improvised Explosive Devices that maim and kill thousands of our troops in the Middle East and have and will in other theaters of modern warfare. LANL transfers what is learned at the Laboratory directly to soldiers who can put that science to immediate use reducing casualties on the battlefield. What is more important, a possible minor risk to common earthworms and ~~field~~^{open} mice in a small patch of LANL property or the lives and limbs of our military service personnel?

Waste is also derived from research relevant to detection of explosive devices at airports and other transportation hubs, reducing the spread of nuclear weapons, and from cleaning up legacy laboratory facilities. All are worthy pursuits.

These are just a few of the many, many areas of research providing technical solutions to national problems that are part of the ever more diverse missions of the Laboratory.

Treating waste materials near their point of generation in space and time creates fewer risks to fewer people, and to the environment, than transporting the waste for treatment elsewhere.

These components of the LANL mission are essential to the national interest. The risk associated with open burning of energetic waste, if it is significant at all which is questionable, is less than any other means of accomplishing this treatment. I urge you to issue the requested RCRA permit for open burning of energetic waste materials at LANL.

Thank you.

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