

Permit

Kieling, John, NMENV



From: Ronald Rabie [pattiandronrabie@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2010 10:39 AM
To: Kieling, John, NMENV
Subject: LANL Open Air Burn Permit

Hello John:

It is my understanding that LANL's Open Air Burn Permit for energetic materials is due to expire and that there is some thought being given to terminating this permit. I worked at LANL for 25 years and was the Explosives Review Committee Chairman for a few years during that time. Explosive safety was a big part of my professional life at the Laboratory. Among the operations we authorized were the disposal operations of excess energetic materials, of course, within the limits of our permits. As I am certain you are aware, explosives are generally fuels and oxidizers mixed on molecular levels although some are just physical mixtures such as black powder and ANFO. Generally, nitrogen atoms play the role of the "gas can" if you will separating the fuel - carbon and hydrogen - from the oxidizer oxygen - thus the term CHNO explosive. As you can imagine, when the gas can gets that small, it becomes possible to get very rapid decomposition of the material since the fuels and oxidizers are so intimately mixed - only a nitrogen atom or two away on average. The reason these materials are so useful to Civilization - 99.8% of all explosives are used to reshape the planet for roads, dams, buildings, mining, etc. - is that they all carry their own fuel and oxidizer on each molecule, great energy density. As a direct consequence of this physical nicety, these materials also burn in open air cleaner than any other organic materials, period.

I am, thus, somewhat concerned about the possibility that LANL's Open Air Burn Permit is in question. I have been informed that public input is running somewhat opposed to the renewal but I think that you as a science based enterprise are you not? I hope that it is your job to take correct actions environmentally and scientifically despite public outcry to the contrary. If not, then simply putting these matters to a public vote would be sufficient and the state would not need the NMED.

Los Alamos does a great deal of work in energetic materials that positively impacts our military success and the maintenance of our technological lead in military and nuclear technology. The opinions of a few thousand antinuclear protestors may not be as helpful in controlling worldwide terrorism as facilitating LANL's mission will be. Prosperity in peace and success in war - may we have an abundance of the former and be well prepared for the latter.

Yours Sincerely
Ron Rabie, Retired LANL

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4/19/2010