NORTH RAILROAD AVENUE PLUME SUPERFUND SITE

FACT SHEET
ESPAÑOLA, NM / REGION 6

NOVEMBER 2025

Site Background

The North Railroad Avenue Plume Superfund Site (Site) in Española, New Mexico, is characterized by a groundwater contaminant plume that is approximately 260 feet deep and, historically, covered approximately 58 acres. The source of the contamination is the former Norge Town Laundry and Dry Cleaners facility, where the spill of a dry-cleaning solvent, tetrachloroethylene (PCE), a known hazardous substance, resulted in its release into the ground to contaminate the underlying soil and groundwater. Degradation products of PCE are also contaminants present in the groundwater. A prior remedial investigation by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), performed on behalf of EPA, detected these contaminants in a shallow aquifer and four deep aquifer zones. The contaminated deep aquifer serves as the sole-source drinking water supply for the City of Española, Santa Clara Pueblo, and individual private wells in the vicinity of the Site.

The City of Española has a population of approximately 10,526 residents, while the Santa Clara Pueblo is home to around 1,500 individuals. Ensuring the safety and quality of this vital water resource is of paramount importance to the community.

The site cleanup consists of the injection of organic substances into the contaminated aquifer zones at groundwater wells (referred to as organic treatments) to promote or enhance the growth of very small, naturally occurring organisms (micro-organisms) in the aquifer that break down the contaminants into non-hazardous forms. This treatment process is called *in-situ* bioremediation.

This approach targets the following specific areas for Cleanup: soils at an area near the former drycleaner facility, designated as the Source Area and Hot Spot, and groundwater contamination in the shallow aquifer and four deep aquifer zones. Cleanup began in 2009 and is now in the operation and maintenance (O&M) phase of the Superfund process, where NMED continues to implement the *in-situ* bioremediation remedy and monitor cleanup progress by collecting groundwater samples at monitoring wells installed across the Site for analysis. A photograph of a drill rig used to install a monitoring well at the Site, in February 2024, is shown in Figure 1, below.



Figure 1

Through these efforts, it is NMED and EPA's goal to restore the groundwater aquifers to drinking water quality, thereby safeguarding public health by providing clean and safe drinking water to the affected communities.

In accordance with the Superfund law, EPA, with support by NMED, performs a review of the cleanup every five years to determine if it is working well and will keep protecting people's health and the environment (referred to as a Five-Year Review). The Fourth Five-Year Review for the Site was completed in August 2025.

Findings of the 4th Five-Year Review

EPA's Fourth Five-Year Review looked at the progress of the cleanup covering the last five years (from August 19, 2020, to August 18, 2025). Interviews were conducted with local residents, the City of Española, Santa Clara Pueblo, NMED's contractor performing the cleanup, and other key stakeholders to document any perceived problems or successes with the cleanup. A Five-Year Review Report was prepared that documents the findings of the review. The Report also presents EPA's determination on the protectiveness of the remedy.

Overall, EPA found the ongoing cleanup to be protective in the short term because there is currently no known exposure to contaminated groundwater and the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer prohibits permitting of new water wells over the area of contamination. A review of groundwater information collected during the last five years has shown that the organic treatments have successfully reduced contaminant levels in groundwater, with the cleanup progressing much faster in the shallow aquifer than in the deep aquifer zones.

EPA also found that contaminant levels still remain above the cleanup levels in some areas and more work needs to be done for the cleanup to be protective in the long term. Here are the main findings:

- **Other Groundwater Contaminants of Concern and Their Cleanup Goals Have Not Been Identified for the Public Record:** EPA needs to identify, for the public record, the other groundwater contaminants of concern that are being cleaned up and their corresponding cleanup levels in a decision document referred to as an *Explanation of Significant Difference*. EPA's original Record of Decision, issued in 2001, reported these contaminants but did not identify them posing a health concern because their levels were below drinking water standards at that time.
- **Slow Progress in Cleaning Up the Deep Aquifer and Source Area:** Additional organic treatments are needed at specific locations in the deep aquifer and, possibly, the shallow aquifer Source Area depending on future monitoring results.
- **Extent of Deep Aquifer Contaminant Plume Needs Further Study:** Some wells show changing or increasing contamination levels in deep aquifer zone plumes. More work is needed to improve our understanding of where the contamination has spread in those zones.
- **Repairs:** Repair a damaged deep aquifer well**.**
- **Vandalism Issues:** Vandalism is happening at the two treatment buildings. More steps need to be taken to stop vandalism.
- **Community Engagement:** NMED should keep talking with everyone involved and hold regular meetings and updates that are easy for the public to attend.

More details on these findings can be found in the EPA's Fourth Five-Year Review Report.

What's Next

EPA's Fourth Five-Year Review Report recommends the following work to make sure the ongoing cleanup stays effective over the long term:

- **Keep Sampling Groundwater**: We should continue testing groundwater to observe how well the organic treatments added in 2020 and 2024 are working. More treatments may be needed for the shallow aquifer in the Source Area and Hot Spot to meet cleanup goals.
- **Keep Treating Groundwater**: We should continue the organic treatments to make the bioremediation process work better and faster in the deep aquifer to meet cleanup goals.
- **Install More Monitoring Wells**: We need to put in more wells and sample them to better

understand how far the contamination has spread in the deep aquifer.

Site Information Resources

Site documents, including the Fourth Five-Year Review Report, can be obtained at the EPA website: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/north-railroad-avenue-plume

Health assessment documents can be obtained at the ATSDR website: https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/PHA/PHAListing.aspx?StateIndicator=NM

Notices to the public can be viewed at the NMED website: https://www.env.nm.gov/public-notices/

Site documents prepared by NMED, including annual reports, the updated O&M Plan for 2026, and NMED fact sheets can be obtained at the NMED website: https://www.env.nm.gov/gwqb/gwqb-sites-of-interest/

All news media inquiries should be directed to the EPA Region 6 Press Office: R6Press@epa.gov and the NMED Office of Communications: drew@goretzka@env.nm.gov and george.estrada@env.nm.gov.

Key Contacts

Camille Dwyer – Project Manager
New Mexico Environment Department
P: 505-670-0691 | E-mail: camille.dwyer@env.nm.gov

Joshua Faulconer – O&M Team Leader
New Mexico Environment Department
P: 505-670-1244 | E-mail: joshua.faulconer@env.nm.gov

Mark Purcell – Remedial Project Manager
U.S. EPA Region 6
P: 214-665-6707 | E-mail: purcell.mark@epa.gov

Tom Ruiz – Community Involvement Coordinator
U.S. EPA Region 6
P: 214-665-3153 | E-mail: ruiz.thomas@epa.gov