

Key Facts: The Hazardous Waste Permit for Los Alamos National Laboratory

Los Alamos National Laboratory has applied to the New Mexico Environment Department for a 10-year extension to safely store and manage hazardous waste.

However, in its most recent draft permit, NMED has denied the portion of the permit that allows us to conduct onsite treatment of residues from non-nuclear counterterrorism and national security research.

LANL's position regarding open burning

- 1. Open burning is safer than transporting unstable explosive wastes.**
Without open burning in LANL's safe, remote areas, LANL would have to transport unstable wastes on public roads. If protecting health and safety is a guiding principle in determining this permit, NMED should allow open burning as part of the permit.
- 2. Open burning poses no human health risk.** LANL and NMED agree on this. There is potentially a slightly elevated risk to deer mice and earthworms in the immediate area, but no threats to their populations at large.
- 3. Important national security work would cease or move.** Without open burning, the Lab's research on detecting explosives, defeating improvised bombs, and creating stronger armor would be jeopardized. The Laboratory has scientists with unique experience in this field, and could lose programmatic funding or jobs at a very inopportune time for Northern New Mexico.
- 4. None of the waste treated with open burning comes from the manufacture of nuclear weapons,** and the waste is not radioactive.
- 5. The Laboratory could lose important commercial work.** For example, research on safer and less-polluting fireworks.

LA-UR-10-01636

We are committed to working with NMED to develop a permit that protects our workers, the public, and the environment. However, the data show that a denial of open burning would jeopardize important national security missions with no appreciable benefit to the environment. For more information, please visit <http://www.lanl.gov/environment/rcra.shtml> or call 505-667-0216.