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Date: DEC 15 2009
Refer To: EP2009-0654

James Bearzi, Bureau Chief
Hazardous Waste Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1
Santa Fe, NM 87505-6303



Subject: Request Extension of Time for the Completion of Well R-50

Dear Mr. Bearzi:

Los Alamos National Laboratory (the Laboratory) requests an extension to February 15, 2010, for completion of regional aquifer well R-50. On August 31, 2009, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) sent a letter to the Laboratory regarding Modification of Approval of Drilling Work Plan for Los Alamos and Pueblo Canyons Groundwater Monitoring Well Installations Direction to Install Chromium Investigation Well R-50. In the letter, NMED required a completion date for R-50 of December 31, 2009. On October 16, 2009, the Laboratory submitted the Drilling Work Plan for Regional Aquifer Well R-50 to NMED in which an alternative completion date of February 23, 2010, was proposed. In the approval with modification for the drilling work plan for R-50, NMED reiterated the direction to complete R-50 by December 31, 2009, with the understanding that if difficulties arise, the Laboratory will notify NMED by December 15, 2009. This letter serves as the notification to NMED that drilling problems arose in the completion of R-50 for the reasons described below, and the Laboratory will not be able to meet the December 31, 2009, completion date.

Delays in drilling R-50 were caused by a lost drill bit downhole, resulting in the abandonment of the borehole. On November 13, 2009, the drill bit broke off below the downhole hammer assembly at a depth of 949 ft. Repeated attempts to retrieve the bit were made using industry standard methods. On December 3, 2009, the Laboratory decided to abandon further attempts to retrieve the bit and elected instead to start a new hole. The new hole is on the same drill pad within 100 ft of the abandoned hole. Drilling is currently underway and has reached a depth of 125 ft. The Laboratory anticipates drilling will stop just above the top of the regional aquifer before the holiday break with drilling to total depth, and well construction to follow in January 2010.

If you have any questions, please contact Mark Everett at (505) 667-5931 (meverett@lanl.gov) or Hai Shen (505) 665-5046 (hshen@doeal.gov).

Sincerely,

Michael J. Graham, Associate Director
Environmental Programs
Los Alamos National Laboratory

Sincerely,

David R. Gregory, Project Director
Environmental Operations
Los Alamos Site Office

MG/DG/AB/TB/ME:sm

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