



Associate Director for ESH
Environment, Safety, and Health
P.O. Box 1663, MS K491
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87545
505-667-4218/Fax 505-665-3811

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JAN 15 2016

**NMED
Hazardous Waste Bureau**



Environmental Management
Los Alamos Field Office, MS A316
3747 West Jemez Road
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544
(505) 665-5658/FAX (505) 606-2132

Date: JAN 15 2016

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Locates Action No.: U1600124

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

Subject: Response to the New Mexico Environment Department's Letter, "Establishment of Groundwater Background for the Regional Aquifer," dated October 16, 2015

Dear Mr. Kieling:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS) have received the New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED's) letter, "Establishment of Groundwater Background for the Regional Aquifer," dated October 16, 2015. This letter presents information on groundwater background values that are based partly on an analytical method used for samples collected from a set of monitoring well and spring locations, collected by the NMED Hazardous Waste Bureau. A significant number of the new background values were obtained using a high-resolution inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry analytical method that is not used by existing analytical laboratories contracted by Los Alamos National Laboratory (the Laboratory). NMED's letter requires DOE/LANS to begin using the new set of background values as "screening values for all future groundwater sampling (detection monitoring) of the regional aquifer...to determine the presence or absence of anthropogenic contamination, the distribution, nature and extent of contamination, the reliability and representativeness of groundwater samples collected at monitoring wells and springs, and to assess natural attenuation and progress of active remediation."

On November 19, 2015, DOE/LANS personnel met with NMED staff to clarify the direction NMED provided in its letter of October 16, 2015, and to discuss the technical and regulatory implications associated with the direction. Specific topics discussed include how robust the high-resolution analytical method is, whether the method is U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified or meets industry standard, and how the new results would apply as comparison values for results obtained from EPA-certified analytical methods currently used at the Laboratory, as required by the Compliance Order on Consent. During this meeting, it was agreed that the technical and regulatory implications warrant further discussion before a final decision is made

regarding the application of the proposed background values to the Laboratory's groundwater program.

Another point of discussion during the meeting was clarifying what background values the Laboratory is currently using for screening purposes. NMED's October 16, 2015, letter assumed the Laboratory has been using the values from the November 2011 Background Investigation Report, Update to Revision 4. The Laboratory clarified it is currently using Revision 3 of the Background Investigation Report for reporting purposes and proposed to continue using Revision 3 of the report pending resolution of the use and applicability of background values in NMED's October 16, 2015, letter.

DOE/LANS formally request that NMED's requirement to begin using the new background values immediately be deferred until several key technical and regulatory issues are resolved through follow-up meetings proposed for January and February 2016. This letter also requests that the Laboratory continue to use the Revision 3 background values to be consistent with previous screening results. The Laboratory will take the lead in scheduling a series of technical meetings and, as an outcome of the meetings, in recommending to NMED a mutually acceptable path forward.

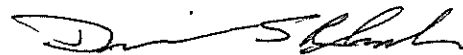
We look forward to hearing from you regarding our requests. If you have any questions, please contact Jocelyn Buckley at (505) 665-5209 (jbuckley@lanl.gov) or Hai Shen at (505) 665-5046 (hai.shen@em.doe.gov).

Sincerely,



Alison M. Dorries, Division Leader
Environmental Protection Division
Los Alamos National Laboratory

Sincerely,



David S. Rhodes, Supervisor
Environmental Management
Los Alamos Field Office

AD/DR/SP:sm

Cy: Laurie King, EPA Region 6, Dallas, TX
Katie Roberts, NMED
Michael Dale, NMED-HWB
Jerzy Kulis, NMED-HWB
Pat Longmire, NMED-DOE-OB
Steve Yanicak, NMED-DOE-OB, MS M894
lasomailbox@nnsa.doe.gov
Kimberly Davis Lebak, DOE-NA-LA
Peter Maggiore, DOE-NA-LA
emla.docs@em.doe.gov
Brian Hennessey, DOE-EM-LA
Hai Shen, DOE-EM-LA
Douglas Hintze, DOE-EM-LA
David Rhodes, DOE-EM-LA
Steve Paris, ADEP ER Program
Danny Katzman, ADEP ER Program
Stephani Swickley, ADEP ER Program
Bruce Robinson, ADEP ER Program
Randy Erickson, ADEP
Jocelyn Buckley, ADESH-ENV-CP
Mike Saladen, ADESH-ENV-CP
Alison Dorries, ADESH-ENV-DO
Michael Brandt, ADESH
Amy De Palma, PADOPS
Craig Leasure, PADOPS
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