

Upper Los Alamos Canyon Project Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Upper Los Alamos Canyon Project?

A: The [Upper Los Alamos Canyon Project](#) will assess areas that have been or could have been affected by Laboratory operations from the days of the Manhattan Project to the early 1970s. The project fulfills requirements of the [Consent Order](#) between the New Mexico Environment Department, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the Laboratory.

Project personnel plan to take soil samples from numerous locations, including private property. Samples will not be taken from private property unless and until the property owner gives permission to do so. Samples will be taken from the least intrusive locations possible and in a manner that is least disruptive to residents. Samples will be analyzed for an extensive list of chemicals or radioactive materials.

Because most areas in the Upper Los Alamos Canyon area have been cleaned up in the past, we do not expect to find contaminants in residential areas that pose a risk to occupants. If samples indicate that contaminants could present a risk to occupants, the areas will be cleaned up to residential standards in coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department.

Q: Where will project activities occur?

A: The project will encompass the Los Alamos townsite area in the vicinity of Los Alamos Canyon from DP Road to the Los Alamos County Research Park area. In the downtown area, the project will entail sampling at locations south of Central Avenue, including locations near Ashley Pond. The project also will cover Trinity Drive and townsite areas immediately to the south.

Q: Why should I sign an access agreement to allow sampling on my property?

A: Without an access agreement, project personnel cannot take samples. And it is only through environmental sampling that the New Mexico Environment Department can either

- certify that a property is safe for residents or occupants and requires no further action by the Laboratory or the Department of Energy or
- determine that a property requires remediation to eliminate potential risk from possible historic Laboratory contamination.

Q: If a contaminant is found on my property, does it mean my family is at risk?

A: Not necessarily. There is a potential risk only if

- a discovered contaminant were to be found at a concentration that causes harm (usually determined by an independent agency such as the Environmental Protection Agency or the New Mexico Environment Department) and
- a person could be exposed to the contaminant in such a way as to cause harm.

Human beings are exposed every day to a variety of manmade chemicals and radioactivity; but brief exposures to small amounts usually do not result in harm. For more information about risk, please see such Web sites as the following:

EPA Research in Risk Assessment @

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/nceariskassess.cfm?ActType=RiskAssess>

California Guide to Health Risk Assessment @

<http://www.oehha.ca.gov/pdf/HRSguide2001.pdf>

Q: Will the project affect my family and its activities?

A: Ensuring the safety of the public and our workers will be our primary concern throughout the project. Wherever possible, samples will be taken from the least intrusive locations on private property (with property owner permission, of course) and in a manner that is least disruptive to residents or tenants. In previous town site investigations, Laboratory Environmental Programs

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personnel have worked closely with property owners and residents to accommodate concerns or scheduling necessities. In most cases, sampling crews will be in and out of individual neighborhoods within a week. Project personnel will observe County noise restrictions while sampling.

Q: Will my property and landscaping be restored after the sampling?

A: Yes. Residents or owners concerned with proposed sampling locations can discuss alternative sampling areas with Project Leader, Becky Coel-Roback

Q: If sampling is scheduled for my property, does it mean my property is contaminated?

A: No. In addition, since most areas in the project area have been cleaned up in the past, project personnel do not expect to find contaminants that pose a risk to residents or tenants. We expect that sampling activities will confirm that properties are not adversely affected by historic Laboratory operations. If sampling indicates the presence of contamination that could pose a health risk to you or your family, your property will be remediated in coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department to eliminate that risk.

Q: Can I find out the sampling results for my property even if there are no risks?

A: Sampling results will be available to the public after the data are validated and the final report is submitted to the New Mexico Environment Department by March 2009 . Prior to that time, the project leader will be available to discuss preliminary sampling results with owners and occupants upon request.

Q: Do I need to disclose sampling results when I sell my home?

A: You should consult a licensed real estate agent and/or an attorney for advice on this issue.

Q: Will sampling sites be marked?

A: Yes, sites will be temporarily marked, typically with small colored flags and/or surveyors' paint.

Q: How will I know when the Lab is going to sample my property?

A: The access agreement requires the Laboratory to notify land owners 48 hours before sampling begins. If land owners provide contact information for other parties (e.g., residents or tenants) in timely fashion, the Laboratory will also notify those parties in advance. Laboratory Environmental Programs personnel intend to work closely with property owners and residents to accommodate special needs or scheduling necessities. Wherever possible, samples will be taken from the least intrusive locations on private property and in a manner that is least disruptive to residents.

Q: How long will the project last?

A: In most cases, crews will complete their work at individual sampling sites within a few days of starting. The start dates for sampling will be staggered. The project as a whole should last about six months. A final report on the project is due to the New Mexico Environment Department by May 2009.

Q: Where can I get more information on this project?

A: The [project Web site](#) is a good source. There you'll find the project plan, fact sheets, and a wealth of other information. In addition, Lorrie Bonds Lopez, 667-0216, can answer questions about the project. Questions or comments can also be submitted by electronic mail to envoutreach@lanl.gov. The Laboratory will establish other channels of communication as the project progresses.