



September 13, 2000 Public Meeting Summary with Public Comments / Questions & Answers

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(Slides are reproduced from presentation; speaker comments follow.)

(Statements are not direct quotes, they are paraphrased.)

(Public comments and questions made during the meeting are preceded by the word "Public." Response to the questions/comments are preceded by the responder's name when available.)

Project Update, Draft Report, Access Issues

Time 5-7 p.m.

Location: Holiday Inn Express
Los Alamos, NM

Speakers Paul Renard, CDC Project Officer
Charles Miller, CDC Technical Lead
Tom Widner, Project Manager
Susan Flack, Public Involvement Coordinator

Summary Leaders of the Los Alamos Historical Document and Retrieval and Assessment Project reported on progress made on the project to date. Agenda items included discussion of issues related to laboratory security and regaining access to classified records, as well as a description of the draft version of the project's report regarding historical off-site releases.

Paul Renard introduced speakers and topics, including discussion of the access issue. Regarding access to laboratory records, Renard emphasized that the CDC is committed to excellent science and putting facts on the table. CDC does not have an agenda. Its approach is neutral.

Renard said: With the fire in May, access was withdrawn during evacuation of the Los Alamos and the laboratory. In early June, access to classified records and vaults was withdrawn because of national security issues as reported in the news media. We continue to work in unclassified records. We have not come to a standstill. CDC and its contractor is committed to following all national security rules. We have requested new access to the Department of Energy (DOE) Headquarters. If we do not gain access back into the classified records, I will make the recommendation to terminate the project. As the project officer it is not fair to ask the contractors to work in the periphery. I am confident that terminating the project won't be necessary. We proceed with that spirit.

Charles Miller announced the draft report. Miller said: That the draft report is not the final report. It is not a CDC report. It is a ChemRisk report. The report is a representative picture of where we are at this time, where we are going, and where we are now. It includes information and a critique. If you don't like where the project is heading, let Tom Widner know. If you know of something that should be in here, let us know. We want complete documentation of the site. This is a living document, and is not final. It will be updated on a regular basis. It clearly is a draft. But it is important, because we want to know what your comments are.

Tom Widner provided details about the project status and the contents of the draft report.

Susan Flack reviewed a set of sample documents typical of what the team is finding during the document review.

The meeting concluded with public comments and questions.

Note: Some slides previously presented at the introductory meeting were again presented during this meeting as background information. Please see the February 23, 1999 meeting summary and slides to view these slides.

Slides & Notes Tom Widner
Public Comments / Questions and Answers

Presentation (Tom Widner)

What we are doing in Los Alamos

- Reviewing historical records
- Selecting those relevant to off-site releases or health effects
- Describing those relevant documents in a project information database
- Making copies of relevant documents available to the public
- Summarizing historical operations and what was released, prioritize releases

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The database and documents will be made available to the public at several reading rooms.

Where we are in the process

- Document review is at most one-third complete.
- We have reviewed over 95% of the paper documents at the Central Records Center, but much microfilm and microfiche remains to be reviewed.
- We have reviewed most of the records at the ES&H collection at TA-35.
- We have reviewed less than 5% of the reports at the Report Collection.

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The document search is about one-third complete, but maybe less. We don't have a real good handle on what is out there. We find more all the time.

The review of unclassified ES&H documents is essentially done. We are now looking at the Technical Report Collection, which has some records that are not classified.

Please keep in mind that...

- Many more documents remain to be reviewed, and there are many more interviews to be conducted.
- Many of the relevant documents we have identified are not yet available for our use or for public release.
- Anything we say about prioritization of releases at this point is based on LANL summary reports, not on independently estimated releases.

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We intend to conduct many more interviews. It took us a little more than a year to figure out the release process. Then the heightened security issue came into play. Once access is regained, the process should be speedy.

Contents of the draft history/prioritization document

- Introduction to the project
- History of Los Alamos operations
- Overview of information gathering to date
- Effluent data availability
- Environmental data availability
- Radionuclide releases and their prioritization
- Chemicals used and their prioritization

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History of Operations

- Processing of plutonium
- Processing of uranium
- Processing of other metals
- Tritium operations
- Polonium operations
- Operations with radioactive lanthanum
- Processing of high explosives
- Testing of high explosives
- Nuclear weapon component design & testing

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We have started to put together a timeline. The timeline includes fires, significant events, reactors, etc., and it shows overlaps. If you have suggestions of what to include, let us know.

History of Operations

- Nuclear device testing (weapons, Plowshare)
- Nuclear reactor development
- Accelerators
- Criticality testing
- Fusion research
- Plasma thermocouple
- Biological research
- Waste treatment and disposal
- Special studies

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Effluent Data Availability

- We are identifying and characterizing the release points at LANL.
- We are trying to find the ?raw data? for effluent measurements, or as close to it as possible.
- We are cataloging the periods of time for which we have located various forms of effluent data.

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Table 4 is quite an effort in starting this process. This is an important step for learning where the airborne releases took place. We are trying to get raw data. Tables 6, 7, and 8, identify types of data that we have found. Table 8 is effluent data. As we find more data, we will continue to build on our report.

The data starts in 1948, before that is an unknown.

We look at releases and what volume was present. We present the dilution volume over time. Starting in 1948, plutonium is more important. After 1972, tritium is a more important issue because plutonium releases became more controlled.

Environmental Data Availability

- We are searching the documents for historical environmental measurements.
- We are familiarizing ourselves with routine monitoring programs and special studies that have been conducted by LANL and others.
- We are summarizing the environmental surveillance data that are available.

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Prioritization of Radionuclide Releases

- We have summary documents that describe past radionuclide releases, and we are assembling the effluent measurements.
- We have made some preliminary comparisons between radionuclides, sources, and plutonium facilities.

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Chemicals Used and their Prioritization

- We are assembling data from-
 - The current chemical inventory system
 - Historical chemical inventories
 - Site documents
- We have identified 38 high quantity chemicals from the current inventory and ranked those with USEPA toxicity values.
- We are maintaining a list of toxic materials that are documented as having been used.
- We have prepared a table of reported quantities historically used or released.

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The modern-day system is a starting point. We will fill in with information from interviews and other sources. At this point in time, we can see what is in use and what chemicals are more toxic. It is a big challenge to go back in time.

Table 20 lists the types of chemicals and materials used. It records quantities used or releases. It is assembled from different documents. The further back we look, the harder it is to find information. We will have to rely on interviews and other tidbits we might find.

The document set will be available in the Los Alamos public library for a period of time. Then it may go to Espanola at the college. Another set will be maintained in the Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico. They have a government reading room in the basement. We are trying to make a good index available to find records easily.

To give feedback, one factsheet includes the names of project team members. Tom Widner will meet with interested people to review suggestions and concerns.

Public Comments / Questions and Answers

("Response" refers to either one or more members of the project team who responded to a questions or comment.)

Question: Will the documents be scanned and made available on the Internet?

Response *Widner*: We have discussed this, and will need to work with CDC regarding this proposal.

Question: Will a public announcement be made when the records are made available?

Response *Widner*: Yes. If the Web site is published, the announcement will be made there.

Question:In the 1990s there were many reported cases of thyroid cancer with a suspected cause being the source term from the Omega West reactor. Has anyone seen which specific isotopes were released?

Response 1: We have not seen good data on that matter, but we will keep that concern in mind.

Response 2 *Widner*:When you talk about a release, correction factors often have to be applied. One of these is determining the significance of releases in D Building in earlier periods. Large unknowns exist that we are focusing on now. D Building is the first plutonium processing building.

Question *Margaret Anne Rogers*: I am concerned about about reconstructing history. I don't see reference to my work. It would have been a short cut.

Response *Widner*: We have not seen your files.

Question *Margaret Anne Rogers*: In those files are interview tapes of old-timers that have died. My emphasis was different because I was trying to figure out what was contaminated.

Response 1 *Widner*: We would like to sit down and talk to you. We want to gear up interviews again, because we gain a lot of useful information and learn more about where and what to look for.

Question: Useful information would include when stacks operated, what equipment was used, what were the specified emissions, and what tests were conducted.

Response: *Widner*: We have found quiet a bit of information on these subjects. I agree, it's important.

Question: In order to identify holes, you need to know what to look for. There has never been a study to confirm official releases.

Response *Widner*: I think we can modify some of our summary methods to document that better.

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