



March 8, 2000 Public Meeting Summary with Public Comments / Questions & Answers

Historical Document

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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

Time 5-7 p.m.

Location Taos Convention Center
Taos, NM

Speakers Paul Renard, CDC Project Officer
Tom Widner, Project Manager

Summary Paul Renard began the meeting that highlighted progress, summarized existing obstacles, and provided examples of results. He also provided background information about the project.

Tom Widner detailed the progress to date.

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 Paul Renard
Tom Widner
Public Comments / Questions and Answers

Presentation (Paul Renard)

The project is the result of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that carved out positions and dollars to examine Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) records. Other sites that were investigated include Savannah River, Fernald, and Hanford. These studies are examples of environmental dose reconstruction studies. The LANL

study is a first step that may or may not lead to a dose reconstruction.

During the LANL study, which has been on-going for about a year, the LAHDRA team will examine all records and determine which are pertinent to a dose reconstruction. The deliverable will be a database of releases and supporting documentation.

We are asking the public NOT to trust us. Get involved; push us; ask us about things that do not seem right.

Some of the hurdles we have faced have become success stories in some cases. We have obtained all necessary badges and access privileges. We are getting sufficient number of reviewers. The successes are a result of collaboration between Department of Energy (DOE) headquarters, DOE-LANL Operations, DOE-Albuquerque, and the University of California. The collaboration was made possible through conference calls held about every two weeks.

Presentation (Tom Widner)

**REVIEW OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS
AT LOS ALAMOS-
OVERVIEW OF METHODS AND PROGRESS**

**Thomas E. Widner, MS, CHP, CIH
Project Manager
ChemRisk, a Service of McLaren/Hart**

March 2000

 

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Document Searches

★LANL Central Records Center

■ LANL Archives

★The Report Collection

★Technical Areas' Records

■ "Work for Others" Records

■ Other sites; e.g., Federal Records Centers



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So far the project team has been hitting the Central Records Center hard. However, they have changed their approach to spread out to the Report Collection and Tech Areas. Ten people on team hold security clearances. They trade off visits to LANL to search for records.

Records in Boxes

- 8 boxes high on metal shelves
- Example: F Bay
 - 16 rows
 - 3,820 "locations"



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The Records Center resembles the last scene in the movie, Raiders of the Lost Arc. This photo is not from LANL, as they will not permit photos to be taken, but LANL's records storage looks very similar. Each box is looked through. Relevant items are flagged to copy, then reviewed for classified and privacy act content.

Stamps for Marking Boxes

CDC/NCEH*
REVIEWED

* CDC/NCEH *
DO NOT DESTROY



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As part of the process, materials reviewed are stamped indicating that they have been reviewed. Materials found as essential to the study are also stamped. Row after row of boxes now have these stamps.

Records Center Review Statistics

(as of the middle of January)

■ Approximate number of "boxes" reviewed:	8,045
■ No. of these flagged for classification review:	345
■ Boxes added to list for review each week:	~10 to 15
■ Boxes that have been reviewed by S7:	~300
■ Number of Document Summaries prepared:	1,400
■ Drawers of notebooks reviewed:	1,200
■ Number of LA reports reviewed:	~1,500
■ Drawers of microfilm/fiche reviewed:	~20



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We add about 10 boxes or so each week. Contract classification reviewers were brought in, and the backlog has been greatly reduced. Review of the microfilm and fiche is labor intensive. The number of LA reports reviewed now is closer to 2,000.

Progress in the Records Center

<i>Storage Area</i>	<i>Number of Locations</i>	<i>Locations Reviewed</i>	<i>Percent Reviewed</i>
<i>B Bay</i>	2,453	1,966	80%
<i>C Bay</i>	3,870	2,729	71%
<i>E Bay</i>	2,385	2,214	93%
<i>F Bay</i>	3,084	2,687	87%
<i>G Bay</i>	4,184	894	21%



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These numbers are current as of the middle of January. It is now probably a couple percentage points higher for each. G Bay is more difficult, but the level of effort was increased and is now 80% complete.

Interviews with current and retired workers help us:

- Identify and describe operations possibly associated with off-site releases
- Identify relevant collections of records
- Develop our understanding of historical operations



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Interviews with current and retired workers help us:

- Identify interview candidates with knowledge about specific subject areas
- Interpret information from documents or other interviews, or fill in gaps
- Understand record-keeping practices of years gone by



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Assistance provided through interviews is very helpful to bring an understanding to some records. For example, the terminology has changed and not all aspects of an operation are always documented.

Sample Documents

Sample documents were presented and distributed at the meeting. These documents included:

Air Samples from 10/8/45 to 4/19/46

One of our first goals is to locate stack monitoring data. This document, from a technical area facility, gives air tolerance levels. We look at how results compare to tolerance levels.

Paul Renard: As a non-scientist, why is this chart significant?

Public: Who is going to do the analysis to determine if it was significant?

Response (Tom Widner): We will prioritize as we collect information. When we look at records, we also must identify other information that will substantiate or complement the information already found. In this example, such information includes filters, how sampled, how often sampled, where sampled. This is just one piece of the puzzle. We must collect all the information to determine significance.

Paul Renard: CDC or its contractors will analyze the information in another phase.

Charles Miller: To determine what is significant we must first determine what are they filtering. We have the counts per minute; we know the facility; we must find out what they are sampling.

Tom Widner: Here they are just doing particle sampling. The records do not indicate what they are sampling. That was assumed based on the radioactive materials used in the building.

Public: How complete are the records?

Response (Tom Widner): That is hard to determine at this time.

Public: How organized is the data?

Joe Shonka: I happen to know this was a plutonium facility. They were looking at radon and trying to account for long-lived particles. While each individual box is well organized, the boxes themselves are not organized. The technicians were very meticulous in record keeping.

Group GMX - 3 Effluents

Older records are difficult to find. For information about chemicals we often have to rely on anecdotal records from across the site. Chemicals were not well documented. This document lists solvents and buildings where high quantities of explosives were stored or set off. Many clues are obtained here about what chemicals were released. We also have some modern day chemical inventories, and from there we are working backward.

Paul Renard: What Tom just said is true at most sites. The chemical paper trail is not complete in the early years.

Tom Widner: Documents that show the amount of chemicals used and disposed of are used to piece together the whole picture. Quite a variety of toxic chemicals were used at LANL.

Air Monitoring Results; DP West

This is another example of stack monitoring showing day and night counts. It shows different counts at the DP West facility. We need to find out how they came up with that number to determine if it is significant or not.

Information on Plutonium Emissions, Ambient Concentrations, and Resulting Doses

This set of four documents is a compilation from microfilm about stack releases from Tech Area 3. A large number of releases came from this facility. The types of filters used are important to know because older filters are not as efficient. This packet talks about adding better filters and justification for adding new filters. The documents talk about efficiency of the filters. Some bag filters were found to be between 0 and 80% efficient. HEPA filters were added that drastically reduced emissions.

Charles Miller: We are trying to collect actual handwritten records to make sure original records match handwritten datasheets.

Tom Widner: Original datasheets are preferred. This report concludes new filters were not justified at that time.

Regarding incidents, we have found documents that include meteorology data such wind speed. Such information helps determine off-site consequences. Again, we prefer raw meteorological information.

This last example gives an indication of high releases. We are seeing where an operation contributed to high-releases. Such records point us in other directions to look for additional information. This identifies specific monitoring. We are also mindful of other operations that were not monitored -- enriched uranium was closely monitored; unenriched uranium was not monitored as closely because it was not as expensive.

Public Comments / Questions and Answers

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

Ken Groves: Where will future searches focus?

Response (Paul Renard): The contract was originally set up with funding increments, based on finish a venue (one area would be searched, when finished the team would move to the next, etc). In practice this did not work because of space problems. The revised contract allows ChemRisk staff to work in more than one location. Some bays have been focused on. Now the team will be moving into other places that we consider important. We will be moving to the tech areas soon and will be finding more of these "nuggets."

(Tom Widner): More information is being made available off site.

Public: We have heard of records that have been moved or destroyed. Stories that are not supposed to be repeated-like dumping in canyons

Response (Tom Widner): Interviews are helping. However, we will never be able to gather all the information to complete the whole picture. We start with documents and use interviews to fill gaps.

Public: We are concerned because this is the most secret lab in the United States.

Response (Tom Widner): We are not being excluded from any records.

(Paul Renard): Some of these stories probably are true. But this is one of the reasons we like to go back to original logs. These are good people. They were conscientious when filling out the records. We will fit together the pieces, but when we are finished, there will be some gaps. So far it is too early to determine if the puzzle will be fairly complete or more like Swiss cheese. We are confident that we will get enough to get a good picture.

Public: Have you seen numbers indicating that boxes were destroyed?

Response (Charles Miller): At Idaho it was discovered that some boxes had been destroyed. Now, DOE has a moratorium on destruction of boxes that are important for epidemiology studies.

(Tom Widner): At LANL, three copies are being made of relevant documents.

(Charles Miller): At Idaho, CDC did not ask for the most relevant documents to be copied. Here ChemRisk is making copies of all relevant documents.

Public: We are making the records available at the public library in Los Alamos. However there is interest in establishing a reading room at Northern New Mexico Community College in Espanola, NM. The logistical problems must be resolved. Right now the only thing we can do is get the documents out of LANL. It was also suggested that Santa Fe would be a good place.

Response (Paul Renard): The MOU agreed to provide one set of documents for a public reading room. Dollars are in question. CDC has stepped back. With the reading room there is a huge financial obligation because the records must be followed for a long time. The documents going to the Los Alamos Public Library reading room are copies with no alterations. The library has a copy machine. We have to remember that Zimmerman Library in Albuquerque is the official DOE reading room, but we are trying to keep the records available in the Los Alamos area. The funds are not available to have multiple reading rooms. This is a big effort to get the records out of LANL. We need a place with good public access and good hours.

Public: It seems there is nothing written in stone. Yet, there is a very interested group in Espanola. It would benefit lab scientists if the records were off the hill. There exists an animosity between the public and LANL.

Public: Is LANL more interesting than other sites?

Response (Tom Widner): Each site is different and has different hurdles. LANL is interesting regarding the variety of operations and materials used over the years.

Public: What are your reactions to DOE's comments about releases and cancer for workers? What is the relationship to off site residents?

Response (Paul Renard): I cannot comment on that DOE headline. It is news to everyone. You need someone from DOE to comment. CDC is looking at off-site releases. Our focus is the public. NIOSH is worker focused. They will benefit from this study, as well. ASTDR is looking at current and future risks rather than historical risk.

Public: DOE admits radiation caused cancer in its workers. What will DOE admit to regarding public contamination?

Response (Tom Widner): We do not accept things at face value. We use these items as clues to find corroborating evidence. We don't believe everything we read in every document. We play one against the other to formulate conclusions.

(Charles Miller): We are establishing a database as a record. It is establishing a baseline. We do not have all the answers today, but the database will preserve the information. We are at the first stage of the first real history of LANL. It will grow. Sometime, probably before the end of the summer, Tom Widner will produce a report summarizing what the team has found up to this point. It will be a work in progress. The public will need to read the report and contribute.

We will make the report available on the web site. We will announce it via a mailing. When you receive notice, tell your neighbors and former LANL workers. This will be a draft for which we will need feedback. Give us guidance.

Public: What do you mean by the national security question?

Response (Charles Miller): The team does not have access to two types of documents. One type contains information on how to steal a nuclear weapon. The other covers how to diffuse a nuclear weapon. This information is strictly technical data. We are confident it would not be relevant to any type of dose reconstruction.

(Paul Renard): So far we have not been denied access to anything we have requested. We fully anticipate being able to look at all records. If we cannot, we will tell y

ou.

Public: Is there a nuclear exemption for a nuclear research reactor around 1969, 1970? Is this part of the study?

Response (Tom Widner): I have looked through a document regarding that particular issue, and it is not marked with such an exemption.

Joe Shonka: We are looking at real weapons information.

Public: Which part of your organization is conducting the interviews?

Response (Tom Widner): The same people that are reviewing documents.

Public: How have you identified people to interview?

Response (Tom Widner): We held a previous meeting regarding interviewing. Plus the University of California has a list of retirees to contact. Some retirees do not want to be bothered. Others are a gold mine of information. We can conduct interviews in remote locations and the interviewees can remain anonymous. Please recommend people.

Public: Is there another part of CDC that is collecting data now?

Response (Tom Widner): We do not do any monitoring. We are interested in the data other organizations collect, but we do not do any sampling. We have contacted sister agencies to see what they are doing and are collecting data from them.

Public: Do not use the CAP 88 Model at LANL. It does not work.

Response (Charles Miller): This study is gathering and prioritizing information. After this study is completed, we will need to evaluate on where to go from here. We may have to use some modified models or develop new models. We have no preconceived notions of what models we will use.

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