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James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

Jennifer J. Pruet, Deputy Secretary

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

Environment Department approves Sandia National Laboratory Mixed Waste Landfill Five-Year Report

ALBUQUERQUE — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) approved a technical report from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that finds that public safety and environmental protections in place at the mixed waste landfill (MWL) at Sandia National Laboratories are protective of human health and the environment.

Per a 2005 order, the DOE is required to provide NMED with a report every five years that includes a detailed evaluation of whether measures in place are protective. To reach this decision, NMED considered extensive technical information, groundwater sampling results and hundreds of public comments.

The MWL is a 2.6-acre landfill located approximately five miles southeast of Albuquerque. The DOE used the MWL as a disposal area for low-level radioactive waste, hazardous waste, and mixed waste (waste that contains both radioactive and hazardous components) from 1959 to 1988.

Environmental protections today are stronger than when the landfill was actively used. Currently, NMED requires DOE to demonstrate the waste does not present a threat to public health and the environment, including through construction of a protective soil cover and groundwater monitoring requirements. The landfill cap and monitoring requirements ensure the landfill contents remain in place. NMED determined that this course of action is safer than digging up and moving the waste at this time.

“While we’re confident in our decision, we are firm in our commitment to monitoring the site, holding DOE accountable and protecting Albuquerque residents,” said NMED Cabinet Secretary James Kenney.

Pursuant to federal and state law, DOE must submit the next Five-Year Report in January 2024, as well as conduct ongoing groundwater monitoring and ensure the landfill cap remains in place in the interim. NMED conducts its own monitoring at the site and plans to expand monitoring to include additional contaminants in the coming year. If contaminant concentrations increase or new contaminants are discovered, NMED will require DOE to take further action.

The final approval letter and NMED’s responses to public comments are available [here](#). More information about SNLOversight is available [here](#).

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, NMED's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau kept nearly 9,000 businesses open, 300,000 employees protected and countless New Mexico families safe by conducting more than 30,000 COVID-19 rapid responses.

The agency oversees more than 1,000 public drinking water systems serving nearly all 2 million New Mexicans, in addition to programs that protect our land, air and water.

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