

Los Alamos

Historical Document Retrieval & Assessment Project

March 2001

The Los Alamos Historical Document Retrieval and Assessment (LAHDRA) Project is assembling pieces of Los Alamos National Laboratory's history to evaluate releases of materials that had the potential to cause off-site health hazards.

Access Restored

In February, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) restored access to classified records at the Lab for a research team working for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Scientists and engineers conducting the Los Alamos Historical Document Retrieval and Assessment (LAHDRA) Project are performing a comprehensive document review to identify and evaluate information regarding past releases of radioactive materials and toxic chemicals from LANL operations. The documents identified will support an independent evaluation of the releases and the potential for off-site health effects. Directed by the CDC and spearheaded by an environmental consulting firm, the LAHDRA Project was projected to be a \$4.2 million, three-year effort. From the time of the Cerro Grande fire until February, however, work in classified records vaults had been at a standstill. LANL officials had completely closed the Lab's secured vaults to outside access because of heightened national security concerns stemming from the incident involving two missing hard drives that contained highly classified information.

Under a special security plan instituted by LANL and the Department of Energy (DOE) for CDC and its contractors, document analysts have been allowed to reenter the Lab's Central Records Center, Archives, and Report Collection. Under that plan, LAHDRA investigators and CDC staff will be escorted at all times when working in classified records vaults. CDC staff will verify whether or not specialized categories of information, such as nuclear weapons information and foreign government intelligence, are relevant to public health studies. The volume of records containing these specialized categories of information is thought to make up a very small fraction of all of the records at LANL. CDC and its contractors believe that this new security plan will allow the study team to effectively investigate historical releases from Los Alamos operations and health risks that may have resulted.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is conducting this review of historical records related to LANL operations to identify those documents that contribute information about releases of chemicals and radionuclides from the site between 1943 and the present. The project team's access to LANL records is unprecedented for an independent group studying potential off-site health hazards. These documents will support an independent characterization of historical releases of radioactive and chemical materials from the laboratory that had the potential to pose off-site exposures.

In This Newsletter...

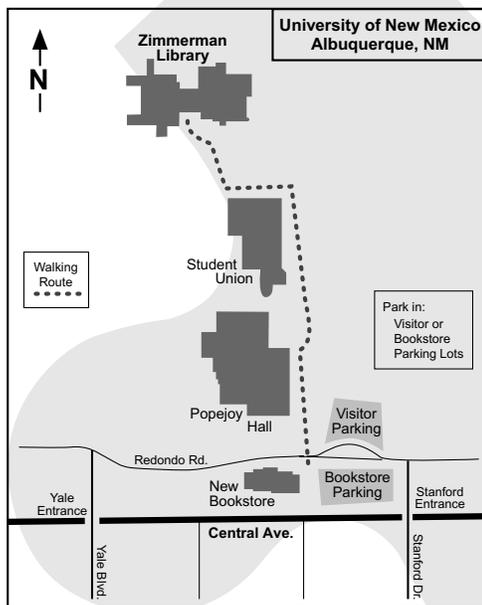
- Access Restored
- Documents Made Available
- Initial Draft Report Available
- Meetings Scheduled (April 24 & 26)
- Same People, Different Name
- Project Web Site Coming Soon



Documents Made Available

Documents selected by the LAHDRA project team are becoming available for public review at a number of locations across New Mexico. The official reading room for the project under the Department of Energy (DOE) policy is at a library of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Fourteen boxes of records were delivered to the Government Information Department in the basement of the Zimmerman Library in early March. In addition, DOE is making arrangements for copies to be made available for viewing at Mesa Public Library in Los Alamos and at Northern New Mexico Community College in Española. While arrangements for the Los Alamos and Española reading rooms will likely be finalized over the next month or so, documents are now available for review in Albuquerque. A database is available that can be used to search the project documents that have been released. The database is available on the Internet at <http://www2.cdc.gov/nceh/radiation/LANL/default.htm>, and will be made available at each reading room.

Government Information Department
Zimmerman Library
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87135
Contact: Robert Wiberg, Library Information Specialist
505.277.8960
For information, see: <http://elibrary.unm.edu/doe/rinfo.htm>



Information about document availability at Mesa Public Library and at Northern New Mexico Community College in Española will be distributed as soon as arrangements are finalized.

Initial Draft Report Available

CDC's involvement at LANL—which currently is in the initial, information-gathering phase—will continue with its records review and interviewing until all document collections that can be reviewed at LANL have been searched for relevant information by the project team. Based on the findings of this first phase, CDC will work with stakeholders to determine if detailed assessment of any past releases, often called dose reconstruction, is warranted. Each stage involves CDC staff, contractors, and the public.

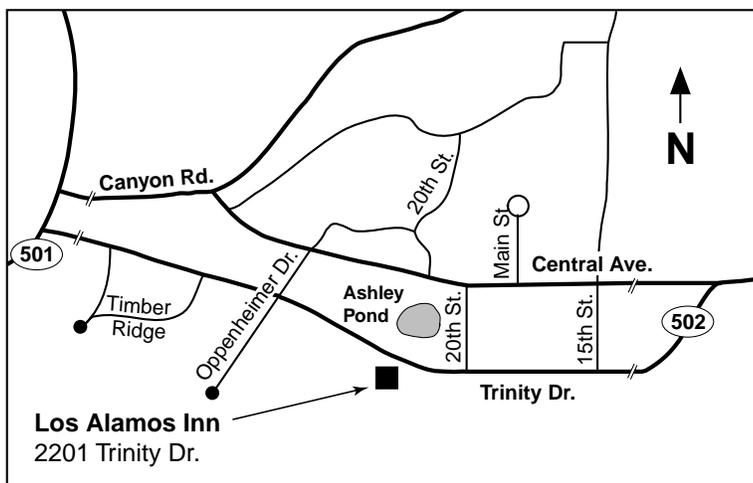
The project's first draft report, released in September 2000, is available for public review. This preliminary report represents the first step towards assembling relevant information compiled by the project team regarding historical operations at LANL, the materials that were used, the materials that were likely released off site, and the relative priority of identified releases. The information in this draft report was obtained from records the project team reviewed at LANL, books and reports available to the public, and interviews with some past and present LANL workers. Although the report is very much preliminary in nature, CDC and the project team are making it available to the public so that interested parties can see the kinds of information found, be introduced to the approaches being used to interpret the information, and offer suggestions about how to improve the report as it is revised and expanded over the course of the project. Your input is invited! Copies of the report will be made available at the reading rooms mentioned in this newsletter or can be requested by contacting the project team at (800) 894-0085 (toll free) or (510) 587-3050.

Please forward your comments, questions, and criticisms about the draft report to project director Tom Widner at:

Phone: (800) 894-0085 (toll free)
or: (510) 587-3050
E-mail: TWidner@JAJonesES.com
Mail: J. A. Jones Environmental Consulting
P.O. Box 23873
Oakland, CA 94623

Meetings Scheduled

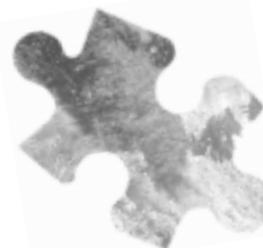
Leaders of the Los Alamos Historical Document Retrieval and Assessment Project have scheduled meetings on two evenings in April to discuss how access to classified records has been restored, how heightened security measures are being implemented, the status of public availability of project documents, and plans for continuation of document reviews and expansion and refinement of the draft report. Public input will be invited throughout the meeting. Details of the meetings are as follows:



Tuesday, April 24, 2001

Time: 5:00-7:00 pm

Los Alamos Inn
2201 Trinity Drive
Los Alamos, NM
505.662.7211

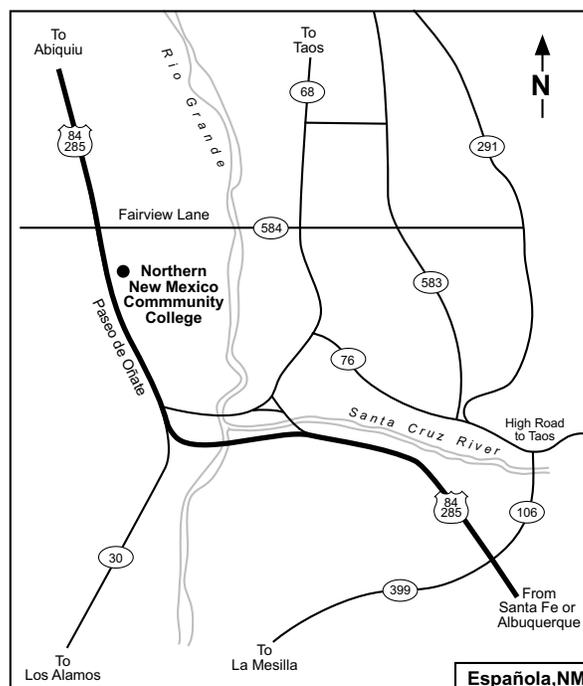


Thursday, April 26, 2001

Time: 5:00-7:00 pm

Northern New Mexico Community College
Center for the Arts Theatre
in the Nick Salazar Building
921 Paseo de Oñate, Española, NM
505.747.2100

The Northern New Mexico Community College campus in Española is located off of US Highway 84/285 (Paseo de Oñate). The college name, which is visible from the highway, is displayed on the Nick Salazar (fine arts) building, the location of the Center for the Arts Theatre. Parking is available on the south side of the Nick Salazar building.



Same People, Different Name



J.A. JONES
ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES

The prime contractor for the LAHDRA project has undergone a change of ownership, but the people working on the project will remain the same. McLaren/Hart, which included the ChemRisk service line under which dose reconstruction and general risk assessment had been performed since the 1980s, was purchased by J. A. Jones Environmental Services in October 2000. Founded in 1890, J. A. Jones is composed of 13 companies with diverse capabilities in construction, development and finance, engineering, and operations and maintenance. The former ChemRisk employees on the LAHDRA project team will continue work under the name of J. A. Jones Environmental Consulting.

Project Web Site Coming Soon

An Internet Web site containing project information is in final stages of testing and review, and will be available soon. It will contain background information on the project and the project team, announcements of upcoming meetings, summaries of our meeting presentations, copies of our draft reports, contact information for CDC and the project team, information about the public reading rooms, links to other sources of information, and forms for submitting comments or questions or adding your name to our contacts list. The project Web site will be discussed at the meetings on April 24 and 26.

Thomas E. Widner
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P.O. Box 23873
Oakland, CA 94623



Los Alamos

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Assessment Project**