

NEWS RELEASE

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW TO DOCUMENT RELEASES AND HEALTH EFFECTS AT LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY

IRVINE, CA – McLaren/Hart's ChemRisk service group announced it began a 3-year, \$4.2 million effort to review historical documents about off-site releases of hazardous chemicals and radionuclides from Los Alamos National Laboratory operations dating back to the 1940s. Working for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an independent team from ChemRisk and subcontractor Shonka Research Associates will further remove the secrecy that has obscured many operations at the facility since the development of the first atomic bomb. A comprehensive summary of historical operations will be prepared, as will a list of materials that were likely released to off-site areas. ChemRisk expects to be able to bring about public release of documents important to the assessment of potential off-site health effects, most of which have long been classified.

"We are asking the public to follow us through the process, share information with us, and ask the hard questions," said ChemRisk project manager Thomas Widner. "Our team has a lot of experience investigating complex facilities with chemical and radionuclide contamination, and we will have full access to related historical records in Los Alamos and across the country. We don't know exactly what we will find, but we will communicate our progress and findings through periodic public meetings, workshops, newsletters, and reports."

Characterizing operations undertaken since 1943 will involve the review of millions of documents on paper and microfilm, interviewing active and retired workers, and identifying the materials that were used in ways that likely led to off-site releases. Materials that were used will be prioritized based on toxicity, quantities that were present, the nature of the operations they were used in, and any evidence of off-site transport and public exposure. Based on the information gathered during this project, CDC will evaluate whether any identified releases warrant more detailed study because of potential public exposures. CDC is currently conducting more advanced stages of similar studies at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and the Savannah River site in South Carolina.

Much has been written about operations at the secret city during World War II, but relatively little has been publicly released concerning the multitude of operations at the laboratory since. The missions of the laboratory have grown considerably over the years to include thermonuclear weapon design, high explosives and ordnance development and testing, nuclear reactor and accelerator research and development, fusion research, waste disposal and incineration, and other chemical, biological, and energy related studies.

ChemRisk, a service of McLaren/Hart, is among the country's largest and most respected risk assessment practices with a staff of over 60 scientists. ChemRisk staff has published more scientific papers than any other similar organization and serves on prestigious scientific advisory boards. They are experts in evaluating the environmental and human health effects of diverse contaminants such as dioxin, chromium, PCBs, and mixed waste. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, ChemRisk has achieved significant technical milestones in defining how chemicals effect human health and the environment.

McLaren/Hart, Inc. is a \$50 million full-service environmental engineering and consulting firm of over 350 environmental professionals with offices nationwide. The company is ranked 21st by *Engineering News Record* among firms that perform strictly environmental work and 48th by *the Environmental Business Journal* among the nation's largest environmental consulting and engineering firms. Serving both private and public sector clients, McLaren/Hart provides environmental solutions through the application of risk-based strategies combined with sound scientific and engineering expertise. Specialty areas include Risk Assessment, Strategic Environmental Systems, Geosciences, and Engineering and Construction.

For more information about ChemRisk and McLaren/Hart, please contact Thomas Widner in Alameda, California at (510) 521-5200. Information is also available on the Internet at www.mclaren-hart.com. Questions or comments regarding the Los Alamos investigations can also be answered through the project's toll-free comment line at (800) 894-0085.

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