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# Rain Threatens to Spread Radiation from Los Alamos National Lab

By Washington's Blog
Global Research, July 19, 2011
Washington's Blog 19 July 2011

Region: USA
Theme: Environment

As I previously noted, radioactive waste was dumped into open pits for decades in and around Los Alamos National Lab – including in surrounding canyons.

As I also pointed out, radioactive waste has been stored in canvas tents onsite at the National Labs, and there were some fires within the Lab grounds.

While rain doused the worst of the fires, there is still some radiation in the air. For example, some Plutonium-239, Americium-241 and Cesium-137 was measured in the air around Los Alamos earlier this month.

And the rains have also created a very real risk of flooding that will spread radiation.

As Reuters notes:

> Crews at the Los Alamos National Laboratory have begun removing contaminated soil from nearby canyons out of a concern that flash flooding could wash toxins into the Rio Grande [that supplies drinking water for Santa Fe and many other communities] officials said on Monday.
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> The soil in the canyons above Los Alamos National Laboratory ... contains materials with trace amounts of radiation.

Press TV reports:

> Now monsoon rains threaten to flood whole communities with contaminants such as plutonium, uranium and mercury, he said in an interview with Press TV's U.S. Desk on Wednesday.
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> He said "there is a frantic community effort under way with mainly Native Americans sandbagging their own homelands"...

AP notes:

> Crews at Los Alamos National Laboratory installed barriers to divert water and removed sediment as they work to prevent any trace of nuclear and other contamination from being washed downstream by flooding triggered by a

> massive wildfire.
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> "This is our highest priority right now," said Kevin Smith, manager of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Site Office. "We had employees work through the weekend
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> The lab has been investigating and cleaning up Cold War-era waste sites ... about 800 remain.

Taos News points out:

> [New Mexico Environment Department's DOE Oversight Bureau chief Thomas Skibitski] said the department will be looking for radionuclides related to energy and weapons research, as well as industrialtype contaminants ...
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> He said contaminants, such as those from atmospheric weapons testing that occurred 50-60 years ago, may get "remobilized and redistributed downstream" ....
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> He said the department may find "measurable levels" of contaminants that don't pose health or environmental risks, and standards may be exceeded during storm events.
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> "Sometimes that will manifest itself as a health advisory," he said.

And Truth Out reports:

> In 1997 Bob [Gilkeson – former senior consultant for Los Alamos National Laboratory who focused on characterizing contamination from the lab's large waste disposal sites, with a master's in geology] was asked to lead the big project of putting in a network of monitoring wells across the then 47 square mile facility to look at groundwater contamination from laboratory operations. After reviewing the work plan that was written by external contractors and some lab employees, he realized it was incorrect—most well locations needed to be changed and the mud rotary drilling method had to be replaced.
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> LANL agreed with Bob's plan to not use the mud rotary method, but then James Bearzi came in as the chief of the New Mexico Environment Department hazardous waste bureau in 1999. Bearzi changed the work plan back to mud rotary. "So I left," said Bob. "I couldn't be part of the process that was going to put in more than 30 monitoring wells, each costing over a million dollars, that were going to hide knowledge of contamination from LANL operations."
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> I asked, in what way hiding—the wells did not provide the proper kind of data to detect LANL contamination?, to which he responded "that's right," and I said that the LANL reports that claim "no contamination is present" would be wrong because the data to begin with is flawed, and he responded "that's right." This is what I'd call a contaminated monitoring operation.
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> Challenging LANL's groundwater monitoring methodology and operation became a passion for Bob. After all these years of efforts, "Three months ago

the New Mexico Environment Department sent LANL a letter stating that the methodology the lab is using (for monitoring of groundwater contamination) cannot ensure that these wells produce reliable data," Bob proudly told us.

I learned why honest groundwater monitoring is crucial at LANL. Joni told us about the shocking amount of subsurface waste, "At LANL there are at least 21 million cubic feet of toxic, chemical and radioactive waste buried in unlined pits, trenches, and shafts, on mesa tops, and in the canyons, inside the lab property. During the 2011 Las Conchas Fire, the LANL Director informed the media that large amounts of LANL wastes are buried in unknown locations outside LANL property. Those pits inside and outside LANL are not lined. All that waste is moving towards our groundwater, and that's why groundwater monitoring is so very important, but their monitoring methods are hiding the detection of contamination."



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