Water and Natural Resources Committee
New Mexico State Legislature
Oct. 26, 2026
Fire On The Mountain
Cynthia Weehler
www.burythebarrels.org



Fire on the Mountain

Nuclear waste stored at LANL, unprotected, in a wildfire zone.

2022 Cerro Pelado Fire, 5 miles from LANL

The Public Needs To Know





SPEAK NO RISK HEAR NO RISK. SEE NO RISK

Dept. of Energy–zo the Clown



Our mascot: The inept DOE



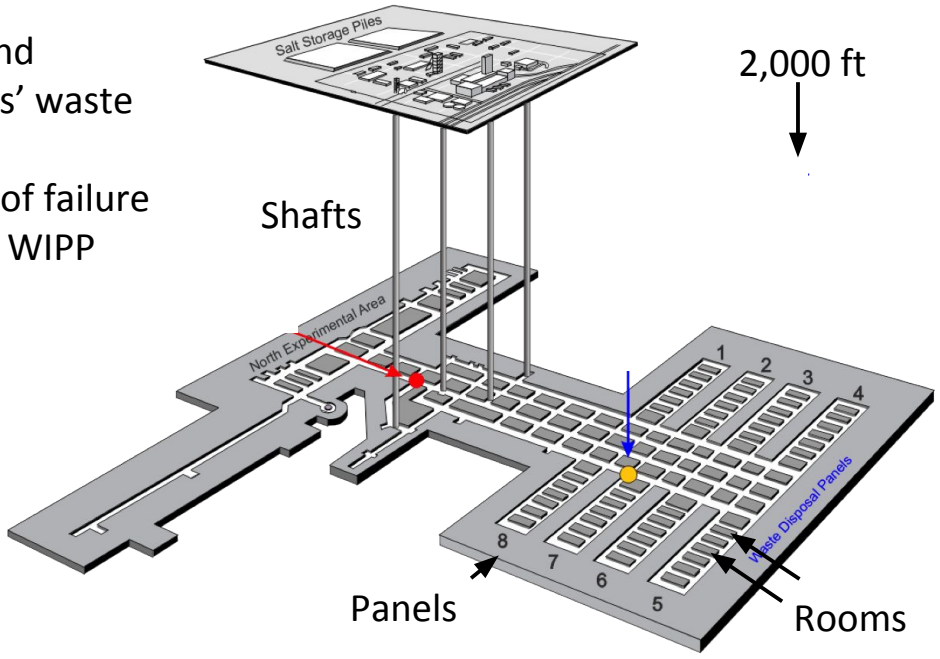




ONE FIRE AWAY
RADIOACTIVE SANTA FE
www.BuryTheBarrels.org

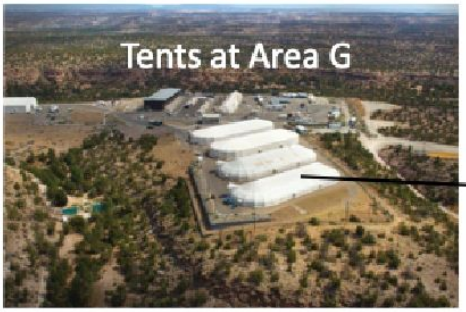
WIPP

- The only operating underground repository for nuclear weapons' waste in the world.
- One-of-a-kind; a single source of failure
- Only legacy waste belonged in WIPP until new Pu pits.
- Designed to close in 2024
- Is falling apart

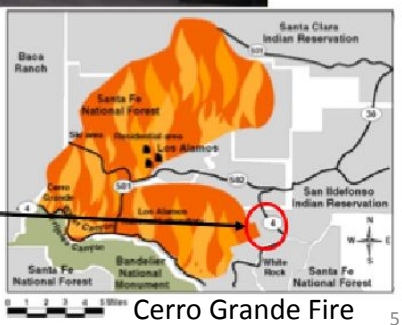


Drums of legacy nuclear waste sit in fabric tents



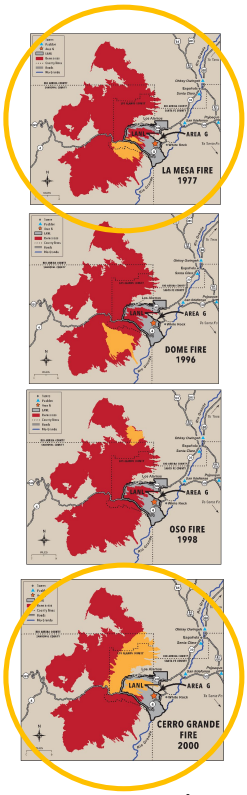


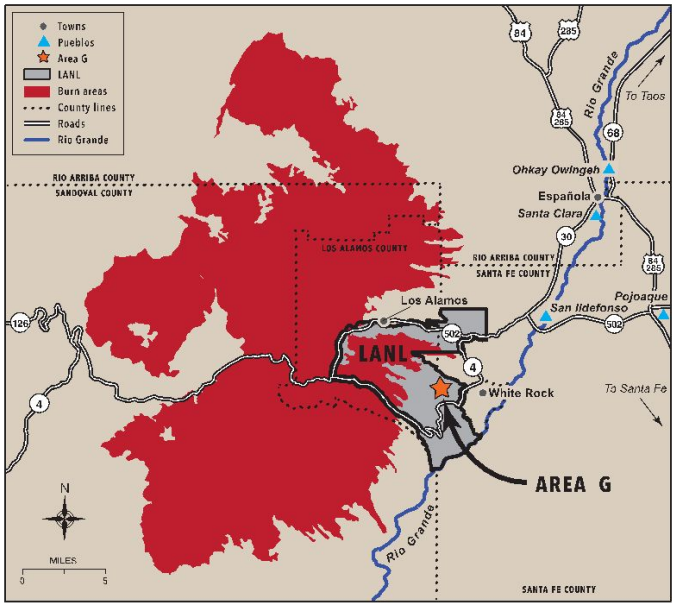
On a mesa
in a forest
wildfire zone

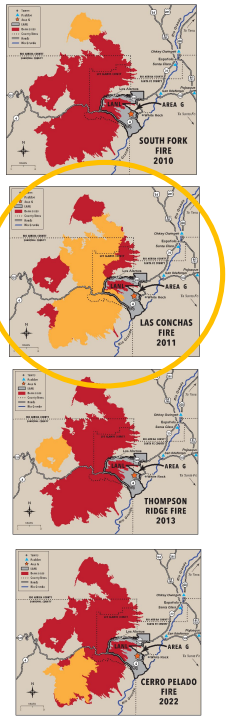


Cerro Grande Fire

The Fires On The Mountain







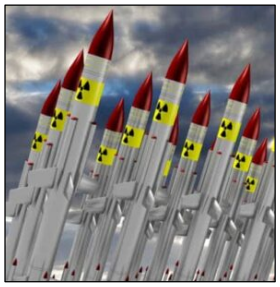
LANL is Los Alamos Natl. Labs

Area G is nuclear waste tents

Circled fires burned onto LANL property

Author Tom Ribe: History of the Cerro Grande Fire & the Rise of New Mexico's Megafires

The Waste



Nuclear weapons
Cold War "legacy waste"
Newly generated for plutonium pits



Radioactive plutonium
DOE



Hazardous chemicals
NMED

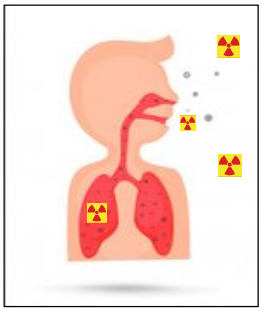


It's mixed waste and diluted with contaminated substances, so it has its own classification: **Transuranic or TRU waste**

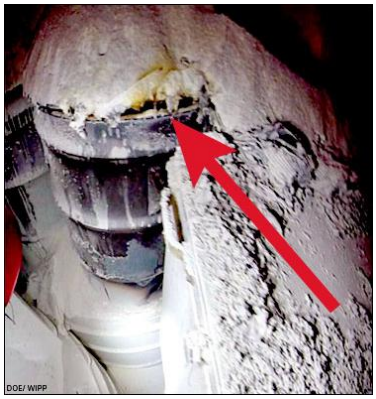
International Physicians
Prevention Nuclear War



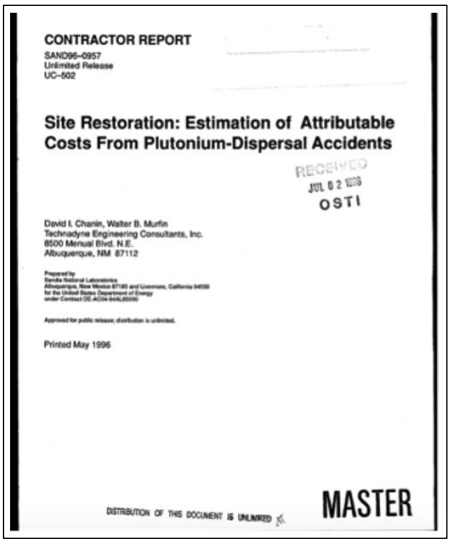
IPPNW



Less than millionth ounce vaporized, inhaled plutonium causes cancer 100% of time



Sandia National Labs
Plutonium-Dispersal Accident Site-Restoration


CONTRACTOR REPORT
SAND96-0957
Unlimited Release
UC-502

Site Restoration: Estimation of Attributable Costs From Plutonium-Dispersal Accidents

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David I. Chanin, Walter B. Murfin
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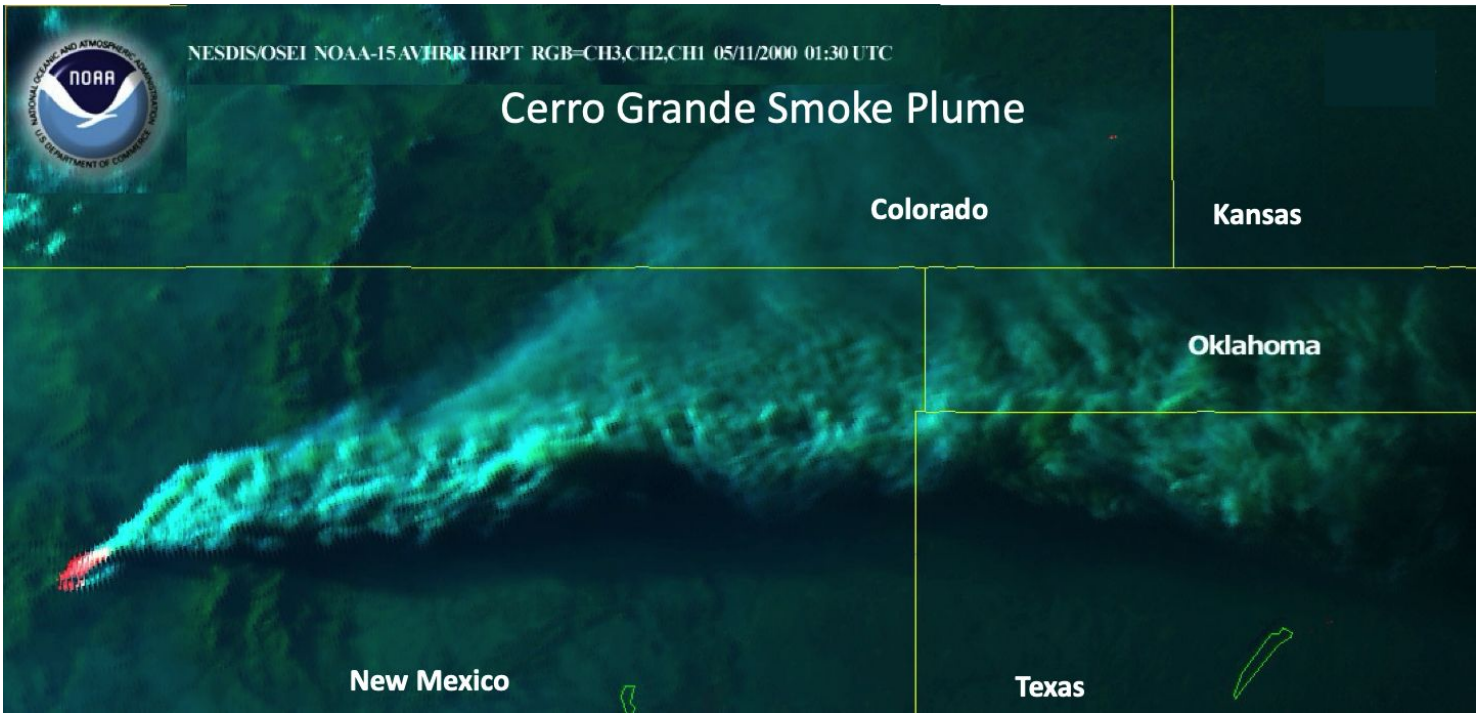
Printed May 1996

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MASTER

Vaporized plutonium would be almost impossible to clean up & contaminate property permanently.

If this smoke plume carried radioactive particles, how much land would be lost?



Plutonium takes 500,000 years to completely decay. Industry would be lost, the tax base would be reduced.

A disaster so dire it can't be fixed:
Avoid it.

Don't let it happen.

The Solution

Put the waste in WIPP before the next wildfire.

Now the ball's in NMED's court! What will NM do?

NMED modified the permit to:

- set explicit goals & timeframes
- can be measured & tracked
- use penalties for failure



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
Environment Department

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR
James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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.

April 23, 2026

Contact: Drew Goretzka, Director of Communications
New Mexico Environment Department
505.670.8911 | drew.goretzka@env.nm.gov

NMED issues draft Waste Isolation Pilot Plant permit
New conditions prioritize legacy waste cleanup nationwide

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department today proposed revisions to the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant hazardous waste operating permit, strengthening enforcement of federal cleanup obligations for legacy waste stored at federal facilities across the country.

The proposed permit modifications codify commitments the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) made in its 2023 settlement agreement with New Mexico. Under that agreement, DOE committed to prioritizing disposal of legacy waste in a new underground disposal unit at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, authorized by NMED during permit renewal.

DOE has since delayed construction of that unit until 2035, effectively backing away from its obligations under the 2023 settlement.

NEW GOVERNOR IS KEY: continuity and consistency between administrations essential.





We have informed both candidates for governor.

Will they use the solution that's already in place?

If they cave, we're back at square one.

This is where the Committee's voice can be powerful.

Our Active NGOs:

Conservation Voters New Mexico
cvnm.org
Southwest Research and Information Center
sric.org
Nuclear Watch New Mexico
nukewatch.org
Union of Concerned Scientists
https://www.ucs.org
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
nuclearactive.org
Veterans for Peace
nmvetscaucus.org/nm
Tewa Women United
tewawomenunited.org



Cynthia Weehler

Relevant Teaching Experience
Chemistry and Astronomy Courses
Luther Burbank High School, 1994-2008, San Antonio, TX 78204, USA

Degree: Master's of Science in Environmental Science, 1993, University of Texas at San Antonio, TX

Astronomy Research
Spitzer Observations of IC2118, Rebull, LM, et.al. The Astrophysical Journal, 720:46-63, 2010 September 1
IPAC at Caltech, NASA, NSF, JPL, NOAO, Spitzer Science Center
Spitzer Observations of Young Stars in the Witch Head Nebula (IC2118)

