



ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
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News Release

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Treatment of Remediated Nitrate Salts Begins

LOS ALAMOS, N.M.,— The Department of Energy's (DOE) Environmental Management Los Alamos Field Office (EM-LA) and Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS) have begun to treat the drums of remediated nitrate salts (RNS) at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Approximately one RNS drum will be treated per day at the Waste Characterization, Reduction, and Repackaging Facility. It is expected that treatment of the 60 RNS drums will be completed in the summer of 2017.

These RNS drums contain an incompatible combination of nitrate salt waste mixed with an organic absorbent, which was added during repackaging to absorb liquids and to neutralize the combustible characteristic of the nitrate salts. As a result, the drums need to be treated to be safely disposed of at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

A treatment plan for the RNS waste was developed by LANS in coordination with internal and external organizations. The New Mexico Environment Department reviewed the plan and approved a treatment permit for its implementation. The treatment plan involves removing the RNS waste from drums and mixing it with water and an inert material to render the

waste non-reactive. The resulting mixture will be in solid form. The RNS waste will then be repackaged in drums prior to shipment.

“Treating the remediated nitrate salts is a key step in rendering them safe for shipment offsite, which is our ultimate goal for these drums. We are committed to executing the treatment process safely and efficiently,” EM-LA Manager Doug Hintze said.

An RNS drum from LANL was the cause of the February 2014 radiological event at the WIPP. Department of Energy (DOE) investigations into the WIPP radiological event determined that the incompatible mixture within the RNS drum created a heat-generating chemical reaction, resulting in a temperature and pressure buildup that caused the drum to breach.

Before the RNS drums are shipped offsite, LANL’s transuranic waste program will undergo recertification to ensure that the program properly characterizes waste to demonstrate that containers meets the revised Waste Acceptance Criteria for the safe disposal of waste at WIPP. This process is one that all generator sites across the DOE complex must complete satisfactorily before waste from these sites can be shipped to WIPP.

