



# NEWS

*U.S. Department of Energy*  
Los Alamos Site Office  
For Immediate Release  
January 23, 2004

Brenda Finley  
(505) 667-6691

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION PREPARES A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR OPERATING THE BIOSAFETY LEVEL-3 FACILITY AT LOS ALAMOS**

LOS ALAMOS, NM, Jan. 22, 2004 – The NNSA announces its decision to prepare a new environmental assessment (EA) for potential environmental impacts regarding operation of a newly constructed biosafety level-3 (BSL-3) facility at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. New circumstances and information relevant to environmental concerns bearing on the operation of the BSL-3 Facility have arisen since the building was constructed. The NNSA issued an initial EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the construction and operation of the BSL-3 Facility on February 26, 2002. As a result of the new circumstances and information relevant to the operation of the BSL-3 Facility, the NNSA has withdrawn the February 2002 FONSI for operating the BSL-3 laboratories, as such, within the BSL-3 Facility.

The new EA will analyze new circumstances and information that were not considered in the original EA because they arose after the preparation of the original EA. The purpose of the new EA will be to determine whether operating the facility in light of the new circumstances and information may "significantly affect the quality of the human environment," thereby requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If not, the NNSA will issue a new FONSI.

The NNSA plans to issue a draft of the new EA for public review and comment. The NNSA anticipates that the draft EA may be ready for review in approximately 3 to 4 months. The timing of any further NEPA documentation will depend upon the outcome of the analysis contained in the EA.