



October 30, 2020

By Electronic Mail

Representative Ben R. Luján  
New Mexico 3rd Congressional District  
1611 Calle Lorca Suite A  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

[Eric.Chavez@mail.house.gov](mailto:Eric.Chavez@mail.house.gov)

Re: Proposed Venting of Radioactive Tritium from Containers at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Dear Representative Luján,

First of all, I want to extend my sincerest thanks to your office for meeting with a small group of community leaders (Beata Tsosie-Pena, Kathy Sanchez, Joni Arends, Paula Garcia, and myself) on October 1, 2020 regarding the many concerns in regards to the proposed venting of radioactive tritium from containers stored at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). I also want to thank you and our other congressional leaders, Senator Tom Udall and Senator Martin Heinrich, for the letter sent to Mr. Michael Weis, LANL Manager on October 1<sup>st</sup> stating your own concerns regarding the importance of including and informing the public regarding the proposed tritium venting.

Although a public meeting was held on October 20, 2020 and another is being scheduled for November 5, 2020, community members and organizations remain concerned regarding the venting of tritium into the atmosphere, especially during a continued pandemic that unfortunately is worsening across our state.

As you are undoubtedly aware, many individuals and community members are highly concerned given the dangers and potential negative health impacts that tritium poses. Tritium can be very dangerous if inhaled and similar to other forms of ionizing radiation, tritium has been shown to cause cancer, genetic mutations and birth defects, and a host of other adverse health effects. It is fundamental to note that the carcinogenicity of tritium and other radiation exhibits a “zero threshold” dose-response relationship, meaning that even a very small dose produces a corresponding risk of cancer. Thus, although LANL continues to state that the tritium exposure levels from venting would be low, there is no “safe” level of tritium exposure.



It is my hope and that of many other community members and organizations, that you are as concerned about this looming tritium venting as many of us are. Our request is not complex, it is asking LANL to fully consider the potential health impacts to already burdened communities and to seek alternatives to the proposed tritium venting. At minimum, the proposed venting should be placed on hold throughout the pandemic. Our tribal communities and communities of color are already facing a disproportionate impact from the pandemic. This is very much related to continued historic environmental injustices imposed upon them. The bottom line is that tritium venting at this time would be the continuation of an environmental injustice committed against communities that overwhelmingly bear the brunt of these unjust practices.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues and for your continued environmental stewardship that promotes justice for the most impacted communities in our state.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please do not hesitate to call me at (505) 989-9022.

Sincerely,

Dr. Virginia Necochea  
Executive Director, NMELC

cc: Charles de Saillan, Staff Attorney, NMELC  
Senator Tom Udall  
Senator Martin Heinrich  
Beata Tsosie-Pena  
Kathy Sanchez  
Joni Arends  
Paula Garcia  
Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch N.M.  
N.M. Rep. Angelica Rubio, Chair, Interim Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee  
N.M. Sen. Jeff Steinborn, Vice-Chair, Interim Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee  
Rep. Christine Chandler, N.M. House Dist. 43  
Governor Perry Martinez, Pueblo de San Ildefonso  
Governor Michael Chavarria, Pueblo de Santa Clara



Mayor Javier E. Sanchez, Española, N.M.  
Mayor Alan Webber, Santa Fe, N.M.  
Secretary James Kenney, NMED  
Ms. Sandra Ely, Director, Environmental Protection Division, NMED  
Ms. Stephanie Stringer, Director, Resource Protection Division, NMED  
Dan Brouillette, Secretary, DOE  
Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, NNSA Administrator  
Michael Weis, Los Alamos Area Field Office Manager, NNSA  
Mr. Tim Dolan, Esq., Triad National Security