



New Mexico: America's Nuclear Colony

New Mexico is the birthplace place of nuclear weapons. The “Land of Enchantment” has always been the single most important state within the U.S. nuclear weapons complex. The Department of Energy (DOE) will spend \$10.8 billion in NM in FY 2026, the same amount as the state government’s entire operating budget.

Eighty-three percent of DOE funding in New Mexico will be for the nuclear weapons programs of its semi-autonomous National Nuclear Security Administration. Another 3% of DOE funding will be for dumping the radioactive wastes of those bomb production programs. Nearly forty percent of the NNSA’s nation-wide nuclear weapons budget of \$30 billion will be spent in New Mexico alone. With two of the nation’s three nuclear weapons laboratories, New Mexico is the American epicenter of the new, more dangerous global nuclear arms race.

Nuclear New Mexico has:

- The Trinity Test Site of the world’s first atomic explosion. Trinity Test downwinders have only begun to be compensated for generations of cancer victims, unlike those in Nevada, Utah and other states.
- The largest release ever in the U.S. of radioactive materials. The 1979 Church Rock spill sent 94 million gallons of liquid uranium tailings and 1,100 tons of solids down the Puerco River in west central New Mexico, through the Navajo Nation and into Arizona.
- The Jackpile uranium mine. It was the largest open-pit uranium mine in the world from the 1950’s to 1980 and is now a Superfund site contaminating the Laguna Pueblo.
- The Gasbuggy site near Dulce, NM, that detonated an underground nuclear explosion to frack natural gas (never commercialized because consumers did not want radioactive natural gas piped into their houses).
- The Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories, which are increasingly becoming production sites.
- The nation’s only current production site for plutonium “pit” bomb cores at LANL. The Pentagon has said that pit production is the #1 issue in the planned \$2 trillion “modernization” of nuclear forces.
- The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, the nation’s only deep geologic dump for radioactive bomb wastes, which NNSA plans to use for expanded plutonium pit production until ~2080.
- The U.S.’ (and perhaps the world’s) largest repository of nuclear weapons, less than two miles south of the Albuquerque International Airport, estimated to hold up to 2,500 nuclear warheads in active reserve.
- A historically complacent (but getting better) New Mexico Environment Department where senior officials regularly leave to work for the Labs or the Department of Energy.
- A congressional delegation which historically has always prioritized greater funding for the Los Alamos and Sandia Labs than for New Mexicans.
- Some of the lowest socioeconomic indicators of all states, such as poverty, per capita income, quality of health and education, etc., while the privileged nuclear elite is highly paid and receives generous benefits.

Sources: Department of Energy FY 2026 Congressional Budget Request, Volume 1, Lab Tables and State Tables; *Quick Facts Los Alamos County, New Mexico*, US Census Bureau; *Quick Facts New Mexico*, US Census Bureau; *The Economic and Fiscal Impact of LANL*, UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 2020, <https://nukewatch.org/bber-lanl-economic-impact-presentation-08-17-20/>; <https://nmeducation.org/new-mexico-ranks-dead-last-nationally-on-naep-test-results/>; *2024 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, Annie E. Casey Foundation; <https://www.niche.com/places-to-live/search/best-counties/>; U.S. Dept. of Labor Worker Compensation Program; <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/best-states-for-education>; <https://www.nmvoices.org/archives/9631>; <https://www.wisebread.com/10-small-towns-with-the-most-millionaires-per-capita>; https://kids.kiddle.co/Los_Alamos_County_New_Mexico.

This fact sheet is available at <https://nukewatch.org/new-mexico-americas-nuclear-colony/>

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