



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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nuclear watch new mexico

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Money doesn't talk, it swears. (Bob Dylan)

Quick Facts

Nuclear New Mexico

- DOE FY 2026 budget in NM is \$10.8 billion (double next state TN).
 - 83% core nuclear weapons research and production programs
 - 14% life extended and new-design nuclear warheads (\$1.53B)
 - 20% expanded nuclear weapons production (\$2.17 billion)
 - \$1.7B expanded plutonium "pit" bomb core production
 - 3% for dumping radioactive bomb wastes (WIPP \$414.4 million)
 - Renewable energies eliminated in abundant New Mexico.
 - Expanding nuclear weapons programs sold as jobs, jobs, jobs
 - Los Alamos County (LAC) 70.6% non-Hispanic Caucasian
 - LAC is 11th richest county in USA, most millionaires per capita
 - Los Alamos County 2024 median household income \$143,188
 - Los Alamos County 2023 per capita income \$73,884
 - Los Alamos County persons in poverty 3.7%
 - Los Alamos County rated best county to live in in USA
 - Historically LAC schools subsidized added \$8 million/yr from DOE
 - LAC receives >\$50 million in annual state gross receipts taxes
 - Indigenous and Hispanic lands unjustly seized for LANL
 - World's first atomic bomb detonated at Trinity Test
 - 75 years still no govt tally of sick Navajo/Laguna uranium miners
 - At least 8,280 sick Los Alamos and Sandia Labs workers
 - Major hexavalent chromium groundwater contamination at LANL
 - LANL plans to "cap and cover" and leave >200,000 yd³ of waste
 - USA's largest repository of warheads 2 miles south of ABQ airport
 - Nation's only plutonium "pit" bomb core production site at LANL
 - Nation's only dump for bomb wastes at Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
 - NM targeted for all of nation's lethal radioactive high-level wastes
- NM's entire FY26 state operating budget is \$10.8 billion.
 - 54% public education K-12 and higher
 - 34% public health and safety
 - NM per capita income falls from 32nd (1959) to 47th (2022)
 - New Mexico 50% Hispanic, 11.2% Native American
 - New Mexico 4th poorest state
 - Median household income \$62,300 in 2023
 - 2024 per capita income \$34,823,
 - New Mexicans in poverty 17.8% (3rd highest in USA)
 - New Mexico rated worst in well-being of children
 - New Mexico is dead last in quality of public education
 - Six surrounding county govts suffer net economic loss from LANL
 - DOE transfers excess land to white, wealthy Los Alamos County
 - Generational cancers, Downwinders never compensated until now
 - Chronically delayed remediation of 260 uranium mines and 7 mills
 - NM facing decreasing water resources and increasing wildfires
 - Lab commonly hires away senior NM Environment Dept officials
 - >\$8B for plutonium facilities, more than all NM schools & hospitals
 - WIPP's mission changing from cleanup to bomb-making wastes.
 - Federal Nuclear Reg. Comm. grants license despite state opposition

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