

Nuclear Watch New Mexico

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Feds Give Los Alamos Lab “Very Good” in Accelerating Nuclear Arms Race “Pit” Bomb Core Production Scheduled Through 2050 Public Review of NNSA Programs Is Being Guttled

“Rationality will not save us... this is very important: at the end we lucked out. It was luck that prevented nuclear war.” Robert McNamara, Defense Secretary, “Lessons Learned from the Cuban Missile Crisis”

Santa Fe, NM – The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has posted its annual Performance Evaluation Reports for FY 2025. In 2012 Nuclear Watch New Mexico had to sue the NNSA for these unclassified reports on contractors growing rich at taxpayers’ expense. The NNSA and/or its parent Department of Energy have been on the Government Accountability Office’s “High Risk List” for project mismanagement and waste of taxpayers’ dollars ever since 1990. According to a recent [report](#), the NNSA currently has \$4.8 billion in cost overruns for major construction projects (likely an underestimate), which represents a significant decline in performance since the GAO’s last assessment in 2023. In three years, cumulative schedule delays for NNSA’s construction projects increased from 9 years to 30 years, attributable to poor contractor project management, poor vendor/subcontractor performance, and general inflationary costs.

In 2019 the NNSA began restricting access to its Performance Evaluation Reports again, so Nuclear Watch New Mexico sued again in 2022. This time we compelled NNSA to post the Reports in an online Freedom of Information Act Reading Room. These Performance Evaluation Reports provide important insights into all of NNSA’s eight active nuclear weapons research and production sites.

In its latest Performance Evaluation Report for the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), the NNSA graded the Lab’s expanding nuclear weapons programs as “Very Good.” At the same time, NNSA praised LANL for:

“... collaborat[ing] with stakeholders across the NSE [“National Security Enterprise”] to develop a programmatic baseline schedule supporting the pit production mission through FY 2050. This represents... a significant advancement in the planning for the pit mission at LANL and the national security needs of the United States.”

Nuclear Watch New Mexico argues that the true national security needs of not only the United States, but the entire world as well, is to avoid a staggering new nuclear arms race. The world’s last arms control treaty expired a few weeks ago and now war is raging across the Middle East over Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program. A Review Conference of the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty, to which 191 countries are State Parties, is scheduled to begin in late April. However, it is widely assumed that it will utterly fail for the third consecutive time to make any progress whatsoever toward nuclear disarmament. The U.S. should be leading by example toward universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament as mandated by the NPT, instead of, in reality, acting diametrically opposed to it through its \$2 trillion “modernization” program to keep nuclear weapons forever.

The grand bargain of the NonProliferation Treaty was that the nuclear weapons states promised to enter into serious negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, in exchange for which the other nations promised to never acquire them. Even after 56 years, the nuclear powers, including the United States, have never even begun to honor that solemn promise. China, France, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and North Korea are all numerically expanding their nuclear arsenals. With the recent expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the U.S. and Russia are now likely to do so as well. While attacking Iran for its alleged nuclear weapons program, Israel has never declared its own secretive stockpile. French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron has publicly predicted that the "[next half century will be an age of nuclear weapons.](#)" In sum, all nuclear weapons states are participating in a spiraling nuclear arms race that threatens all.

LANL plays a key role in all of this. It is currently the only site in the U.S. that produces plutonium pits, the essential fissile cores of nuclear weapons. However, no future pit production is to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing, extensively tested nuclear weapons stockpile.

To the contrary, all future pit production is for new design nuclear weapons that can't be tested because of the existing international testing moratorium. Or, alternatively, these new-design nuclear weapons could prompt the U.S. to resume testing, reinforcing Trump's recent declaration that the U.S. would test (details on this still remain unclear). Other countries are bound to follow, which would have disastrous proliferation consequences.

In 2006 independent experts [concluded](#) that plutonium pits have serviceable lifetimes of at least 100 years (their average age now is ~43). At least 20,000 existing pits are already stored at the NNSA's Pantex Plant near Amarillo, TX.

Plutonium pit production is the NNSA's most complex and expensive program ever, costing more than \$60 billion over the next 25 years (exceeding the cost of the original Manhattan Project that designed and built a plutonium pit from scratch). However, the GAO has repeatedly [reported](#) that the NNSA has no credible cost estimates and no "Integrated Master Schedule" for planned redundant pit production at LANL and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina

Moreover, it's not clear where an estimated [57,500 cubic meters of radioactive transuranic wastes from future pit production](#) will go. DOE is fundamentally [changing the cleanup mission](#) of the only existing permanent defense waste repository, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in southern New Mexico, to become the dumping ground for new nuclear bomb production. But the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has reopened the State WIPP permit to force DOE to prioritize disposal of LANL's Cold War wastes instead of pit production wastes, and to begin looking for a new out-of-state waste dump, which will be politically controversial.

NMED has also issued a draft order mandating comprehensive cleanup of an old radioactive and toxic waste dump. DOE and LANL are adamantly opposed to digging up and treating any wastes, instead planning to leave them permanently buried in unlined pits and trenches as a perpetual threat to groundwater. Moreover, DOE and LANL are invoking "national security" because the poisonous dump is close to the Lab's plutonium pit production plant. They intend to "defer" cleanup until plutonium pit production is done, which in effect means never.

In all, NNSA's expanded plutonium pit production program is so plagued with problems that the DOE Deputy Secretary ordered a "[special assessment](#)" of the program that was completed in December 2025. However, it is being covered up and is still not publicly available.

Nevertheless, LANL is gung ho pursuing expanded plutonium pit production, instituting 24/7 work shifts in April 2025. NNSA has recently called upon LANL to [double future pit production](#) in order to speed up increased nuclear warhead production. But, in keeping with LANL's chronic track record of nuclear safety incidences, the FY 2025 Performance Evaluation Report noted that "operations continued to struggle with glovebox glove breaches, radiological contamination, and radiation protection procedure violation issues, especially at TA-55 PF-4" (LANL's plutonium pit production plant). Not coincidentally, at the same time the Department of Energy is [lowering nuclear worker safety standards](#).

Despite all this, the Trump Administration, and NNSA in particular, are gutting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for public review and comment on major federal proposals. These are not just paper exercises - - past NEPA processes have produced major tangible benefits for both the government and the public (see [here](#) for one example at LANL in which Nuclear Watch played a role).

NNSA's FY 2025 Performance Evaluation Report reported that LANL:

"...successfully implemented changes to regulations within 30 days of promulgation, including adapting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) strategy for the 2025 LANL Site Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS), enabling timely publication of final analyses."

NNSA released the draft LANL SWEIS in January 2025, just before Trump took office. Since then, Trump has eviscerated the National Environmental Policy Act by striking down Council on Environmental Quality regulations. The draft LANL SWEIS dramatically expanded the Lab's nuclear weapons programs but did contain lengthy sections on environmental justice and climate change. These will likely be deleted in the still-unreleased final SWEIS as per Trump's executive orders gutting diversity and climate change efforts.

NNSA recently declared that it would not issue a draft SWEIS for the Sandia National Laboratories nor an environmental impact statement to expand a plutonium facility at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Instead, NNSA will instead go directly to final documents, obliterating any and all public hearings and opportunities for formal citizen comment. So, while the nuclear arms race accelerates, the NNSA will presumably continue to short circuit all future NEPA processes.

However, there is one current significant exception. As co-plaintiff Nuclear Watch New Mexico settled a NEPA lawsuit (just before Trump took office) that requires the NNSA to complete a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) on plutonium pit production. A draft PEIS with public hearings is expected in late May or June. Unless turned back otherwise, this may be the last full NEPA process that NNSA conducts. Nuclear Watch encourages citizens to comment on all aspects of plutonium pit production and help turn this Pit Production PEIS into a public referendum on the new nuclear arms race.

Jay Coghlan, NukeWatch Executive Director, commented: “We are witnessing the prioritization of nuclear weapons production above everything else while worker safety regulations and opportunities for public review and comment are being gutted. All this is for a new nuclear arms race that can end civilization overnight. Nuclear Watch New Mexico encourages citizens to use the pending, hard-won Pit Production Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement as a starting point for addressing these issues. Please stay tuned to www.nukewatch.org for hearing schedules, advance workshops and details.”

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NNSA’s Performance Evaluation Reports and Fee Determination Letters are available at <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/fy-2025>

See NMED’s [Administrative Compliance Orders](#), which includes cleanup at LANL’s “Area C” waste dump, treating a massive chromium contamination groundwater plume, and reopening the State WIPP permit.

For more on plutonium pit production, please see <https://nukewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Plutonium-Pit-Production-Fact-Sheet-2-27-26.pdf>

For more on Area C, please see *The Future of Los Alamos Lab: More Nuclear Weapons or Cleanup?* at <https://nukewatch.org/area-c-fact-sheet/>

This press release is online at <https://nukewatch.org/lanl-2025-per-pr/>

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