LANL demolishes first containment dome at disposal area

September 30, 2009

Event marks progress in multiyear closure plan

Los Alamos, New Mexico, September 30, 2009—A Los Alamos National Laboratory crew today began demolishing the first containment dome at the Lab's largest and only remaining active disposal area.

The 38-foot high, 345-foot-long facility known as "Dome 226" is made of fabric over aluminum ribbing. It once housed thousands of drums of radioactive waste that have been shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New Mexico, for disposal. Demolition of the 12 remaining domes is part of the site's multiyear closure plan.

The Laboratory's associate director for Environmental Programs, Michael Graham, said the demolition marks a significant milestone toward closure of the site, known as Technical Area 54 Area G.

“It’s the first demolition at this site,” said Graham. “It’s a visual measurement of our success.”

The demolition is also important to members of the Pueblo de San Ildefonso, whose sacred lands border the area.

“We know that progress on cleanup at TA-54 means a lot to Northern New Mexico, especially the Pueblo,” said Don Winchell, manager of the Department of Energy’s Los Alamos Site Office. “We’re honored that they could attend today’s event.”

“This was our ancestral domain,” Pueblo de San Ildefonso Governor Leon Roybal said to the group gathered to watch the demolition. “We know what happens at the Lab is part of national security and we are all Americans. We can’t put the land back the way it was, but the spirits still live here, and today is a good day for all of us.”

LANL continues to package and ship waste to WIPP. In fiscal year 2009, which ends today, the Lab completed a record 131 shipments of “transuranic” waste to WIPP including 16 remote handled canisters and more than 2,200 drums of waste.

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