

Lawrence Fioretta

Lawrence Fioretta

I strongly support the needed permit modifications that the New Mexico Environment Department has submitted.

NMED was forced to take this remedial action because the Department of Energy has not addressed the serious health and safety risks posed by unidentified legacy waste at LANL, languishing in drums for decades.

Although DOE agreed to prioritize legacy waste at LANL, its record of poor stewardship has led NMED to take action. The permit modifications provide DOE clear instructions to fulfill its obligations. They allow NMED to measure and monitor DOE's progress. NMED has also established a penalty if DOE fails to deliver on its obligations.

The legacy waste is stored in drums sitting in tents on a mesa in a known wildfire zone. We have already witnessed devastating fires in the area, some of which have invaded LANL property. Given the changing climate and unpredictable weather patterns, a wildfire could happen at any time. The next blaze could create an unprecedented disaster that would cause irreparable damage.

A nuclear release in a wildfire means vaporized plutonium would spread, a disaster impossible to clean up. Homes, schools, businesses, farms, ranches, recreational sites - our environment ruined. New Mexico's land, property, economy, and physical health destroyed.

The prospect of a disaster is real and can be avoided if the waste is moved to WIPP. NMED is taking the necessary steps with the permit modifications to address this threat before disaster strikes.

I applaud NMED for their courage in taking this action. The NMED permit modifications is a wake-up call that puts DOE on notice and underscores the importance of holding DOE accountable. DOE should seize this opportunity and do the right thing. Support the needed modifications to the permit and prevent a disaster.