

Los Alamos Study Group Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACTS: Jay Coghlan, CCNS, 505-986-1973
Greg Mello, LASG, 505-982-7747
Drew Caputo, NRDC, 202-624-9325

October 3, 1994 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Two New Mexico organizations, Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (CCNS) and the Los Alamos Study Group (LASG), together with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), today asked Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary to cease construction of a major nuclear weapons facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The groups charge that this \$117M facility, called the Dual-Axis Radiographic Hydrotest Facility, or DARHT, is being built without any environmental review, contrary to law. The groups say construction must be stopped until the project and its alternatives are analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). They also call for a broader EIS which would address DOE's nuclear stockpile "stewardship" options in the post-Cold War world. Since construction is already occurring, they request a reply by October 24, 1994.

The groups are supported in their challenge by the legal staff of the NRDC as well as that of the Western Environmental Law Center of Santa Fe and the Western States Legal Foundation of Oakland, California.

"This facility is being built without a shred of environmental review," said Jay Coghlan of CCNS. "It will scatter uranium and other toxic metals, creating yet another cleanup liability. Evidence suggests that it is also being designed to conduct explosive experiments with plutonium in giant steel shells. Furthermore, DARHT will likely encourage increased work on nuclear weapons modifications and remanufacturing at LANL. Given all this, the potential risks of the facility are enormous. Writing an internal memo-to-file that says, in effect, "Try it, you'll like it" is just not good enough. Construction of DARHT must be stopped until a real review is done."

"Aside from all the environmental problems, which are very serious, DARHT would be the most advanced experimental facility for the design of nuclear weapons in the world," said Greg Mello of the LASG. "LANL says it needs this facility to meet its schedule for 'stockpile improvements,' but we don't need any new nuclear weapons. The purpose of DARHT is to prevent a comprehensive test ban (CTB)--which the world has sought for nearly 50 years and which LANL has opposed until now--from interfering with weapons design. DARHT is a clear signal to other countries that nonproliferation is a 'Do as I say, not as I do' policy for the United States. DARHT is illegal, it is unnecessary, it will damage the environment, and it will hurt our national security because it shows we are still investing heavily in new nuclear weapons design facilities.

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