



September 6th, 2022

Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee

Dear Chairman Steinborn and Committee,

We thank you for the opportunity to provide commentary on this topic. With such short notice, we have only been able to provide a high-level summary; but if the topic is revisited in the future, we would like to poll our members and gather better data on potential exposure levels and safety procedures in their individual agencies and departments.

We fully support the development of a state program to track state employee exposure to hazardous materials. In fact, our members' complaints about safety issues at individual agencies have largely been brushed aside or met with the age-old "we don't have the budget" excuse. We believe it is time for the legislature to step in and ensure that state employees are working under a robust health and safety program, including a program that will track exposure to hazardous materials and radiation.

New Mexico Environment Department

Members at the Environment Department report that there are no overarching policies or procedures at the agency to govern health and safety of the workers. Staff are exposed to a variety of hazardous materials both in the laboratory setting and while making site visits or conducting field work. Staff may also be exposed to radioactivity while conducting inspections or field work at DOE, medical, or other facilities. Safety procedures and training are applied haphazardly and, for the most part, only made available to our members that seek them out proactively. The health and safety committee meets infrequently, and it is unclear what their role is in the agency, as they have no authority.

NMED Members report the following:

- Some staff are provided with HAZWOPER training, but there is not an overarching training program to ensure that every staff member that might experience hazardous or radioactive material has the appropriate training.
- No direction has been provided on what to do if an unexpected exposure occurs while in the field.
- Employees that regularly visit LANL have been unable to obtain dosimeters to monitor their exposure to radioactive substances for several years. Those that do still have legacy access to the monitoring program do not get reports summarizing their annual exposure.



Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, CLC

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-Safely storing and maintaining chemicals and other hazardous materials and managing associated SDS documentation is left up to the staff, who for the most part, do not have the appropriate training or knowledge to oversee these tasks.

Department of Cultural Affairs

Members at the Department of Cultural Affairs also report there is no overarching program to address handling or exposure to hazardous materials or radiation. Museum Resources Division Conservators and Office of Archaeology Studies Archaeologists and Researchers use X-ray and plasma equipment.

DCA Members report the following:

- Conservation, archaeology, ranger, and museum collections staff have no overarching hazardous materials and radiation training program, PPE guidelines, labeling and storage guidelines, or required SDS records.

- Conservators and collections staff across all museum divisions handle artworks and artifacts that may be composed of, or have been treated with: tobacco, camphor, strychnine, mercuric chloride, naphthalene, paradichlorobenzene (PDB), dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT), methyl bromide, arsenic, mercury, cyanide, red lead, white lead, cinnabar, cellulose nitrate film. There is no consistent testing for hazards in museum collections items.

- Rangers at New Mexico Historic Sites and maintenance, security guard, and janitorial staff across all museum divisions may be exposed to cleaning and disinfecting supplies, animal feces, pesticides, and herbicides.

Department of Health and Miners Colfax Medical Center

CWA needs more time to thoroughly assess the extent of potential exposure that our members at DOH and MCMC experience while on the job. We are aware that members at the radiochemistry section in the State Laboratory Division experience exposure on the job, as well as our members that operate x-ray and other imaging equipment at public health clinics and hospitals. We have heard from members who are concerned that they work with x-ray and imaging equipment in older buildings that may not have been retrofitted for safety.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide commentary on this topic and would like to continue the discussion in the future. We believe that all our members deserve a safe place to work.

In Solidarity,
Megan Green
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