Los Alamos identifies internal material control issue

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LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, February 26, 2009— Officials at Los Alamos National Laboratory have reported an internal material control error to the National Nuclear Security Administration. The error relates to internal inventory and accounting that documents movement of sensitive materials within a small portion of Technical Area 55, the Laboratory's plutonium research, development, and processing facility.

There is 100 percent certainty that no sensitive materials left the facility. The Laboratory has multiple, highly effective controls — including armed guards on site 24 hours a day —that ensure with complete confidence that sensitive materials do not improperly leave TA-55.

The internal material control issue was first reported to NNSA in January. Management at TA-55 is conducting a full review and assessment of material controls for one small segment of TA-55 operations. Normal operations at the facility continue, except for the segment in question.

To track the complex movement of nuclear materials within TA 55, the Laboratory uses a variety of internal administrative inventory controls. These controls are necessary to facilitate scientific and manufacturing work with large inventories of nuclear materials, but are not the same systems that ensure all nuclear material are secure and do not leave the building.

The Laboratory is working with NNSA and experts from Los Alamos National Security, LLC corporate partners to review and improve internal bookkeeping, inventory procedures, and processes. Los Alamos National Security is the company that manages and operates Los Alamos National Laboratory for NNSA.

This issue does not constitute any risk to the public, Laboratory employees, or the environment.

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