



Update for September 2004 CUCSA Meeting

Los Alamos National Laboratory experienced a tumultuous summer.

As many of you read in the local and national press, an inventory for an upcoming experiment revealed a Classified Removable Electronic Media (CREM) incident on July 7. Additionally, on July 14, an undergraduate student suffered an eye injury while using a Class IV pulsed laser for a series of experiments.

Due in part to these incidents, and in large part based on his assessment of Los Alamos' overall risks, Laboratory Director G. Peter Nanos suspended all laboratory activities on July 16. The suspension's rationale was simple: we needed to "exhale," reflect on our shared responsibilities, and undertake a point-to-point risk assessment of what threats we pose to operating safely, securely and compliantly.

As part of this suspension of activities, the laboratory conducted a wall-to-wall CREM inventory. Prior to resuming CREM operations, groups must now complete the validation requirements specified by the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Site Office, and receive resumption approval from Department of Energy Deputy Secretary Kyle McSlarrow.

On July 17, the Senior Executive Team and division-level senior managers binned all laboratory operations into risk-based categories. The groups are: Level 1 – low-risk activities; Level 2 – moderate-risk activities; and Level 3 – high-risk activities. As of August 18, all risk-level 1 activities have resumed; our goal is to resume most risk-level 2 and 3 activities by September 30. The newly established Culture and Operations Model, Plan and Surety System (COMPASS) is marshalling the laboratory's resumption efforts.

On August 4, Los Alamos welcomed UC President Robert Dynes, UC Board of Regents Chairman Gerald Parsky, UC Senior Vice President Bruce Darling, and UC Vice President for Laboratory Management Robert Foley. Director Nanos briefed the UC visitors on the CREM incident and on the status of the laboratory's resumption of activities.

That afternoon, President Dynes and Regent Parsky hosted an all-hands address. President Dynes captured the dialogue's central theme, stating, "I need you to help me, help you." This moment represents a call to arms. Working together with UC, Los Alamos can resolve its problems, restore the nation's confidence, and retain world-class science at its heart. Regent Parsky emphasized that, if Los Alamos does its part, then UC will not only endorse competing for the laboratory's management contract, but it will compete to win with every resource at its disposal.

Especially in this time of crisis, Los Alamos appreciates the University of California's continued support. Although this laboratory faces daunting challenges, the problems before us are neither insurmountable nor beyond our abilities. Together we can rebuild this institution on a foundation of excellence, while continuing Los Alamos' invaluable contributions to national security and science.