

Current Status of Sandia's Rural Arsenic Outreach Program

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The 10 ppb arsenic maximum contaminant level drinking water standard is a challenge to many NM communities because of our desert climate and high natural abundance of arsenic in many waters. Sandia National Laboratories, in collaboration with New Mexico Tech and the University of New Mexico, has been given the task of helping small rural communities to comply with this new legislation.

The Rural Arsenic Outreach Program is an interdisciplinary service being offered to make communities “smart consumers” of the technical, financial and regulatory information that is critical for developing NMED-approved compliance strategies. The focus is on one-on-one interactions which will be initiated after water system representatives attend regional instructional workshops – such as those already being hosted by WERC throughout New Mexico. Water distributors may directly request involvement in the Outreach Program, or they may be contacted directly by the program if NMED Drinking Water Bureau records indicate a particular need.

A variety of services are being offered. These services include non-compliance custom water analyses to help communities search for other, low-As, water sources. If it is not possible to identify non-treatment alternatives for a given water source, the analytical data will provide inputs needed by computer programs that assess the various treatment options available to a community. Computer programs may also be used to help estimate the cost of providing treatment for the water source(s). In some cases, additional “real world” cost and performance information will also be sought from manufacturers to check the validity of the computer cost estimates. An additional service offered by the outreach team is assistance in determining the available funding sources and strategies that can be used to pay for the necessary compliance alternative.

Sandia is a multiprogram laboratory operated by Sandia Corporation, a Lockheed Martin Company, for the United States Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration under contract DE-AC04-94AL85000.

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Speaker Biography

Sue Collins has managed environmental projects for Sandia National Laboratories since 1992. Her projects have included site-wide hydrogeologic characterization, dump site remediation, groundwater remediation and drinking water treatment. Mrs. Collins has served as deputy project manager and department manager for Environmental Restoration. She has an MS in Environmental Engineering from Clemson University.