Evacuation of 65 employees, contractors forces Sandians to find other places to work

for seven days following gas well blowout, fire

By Chris Burroughs

Sixty-five Sandia employees and contractors were evacuated from the Carlsbad office for seven working days following the blowout of a natural gas well being drilled near the Labs building.

They joined up to 1,500 Carlsbad residents who were also forced to leave their homes as a precaution to avoid danger caused by noxious fumes being emitted from the well and the eventual flaring designed to consume those gases.

The evacuation of the Carlsbad office caused the Sandians to find other places to work — home, DOE offices, and contractors’ facilities — until they were allowed back.

The incident started about 9:30 a.m. Thursday, March 11, when employees heard what sounded like a freight train coming through their parking lot.

“Employees looked outside the buildings to see what turned out to be the well blowout,” says Paul Shoemaker, Level II Manager of Carlsbad Programs Group. “As a precaution, we got everyone out of the building, telling them to report back to work at 1 p.m. But the gases coming from the well site were dangerous enough that, not only were the Sandia building and a nearby fire station evacuated, but all other businesses and hundreds of homes in a one-mile radius were evacuated as well.”

On Friday, March 12, the drilling rig operator, Chi Operating Inc., brought in blowout-control experts from out of state to cap the well.

Part of the capping process involved burning off the dangerous gases, which started on Saturday.

While the red flare coming from the well as the gases burned off was a good sign that one danger was coming under control, it was bad for Sandia because it was close — way too close — to the Labs’ facilities. From the wellhead to Sandia because it was close — way too close — to the Labs’ facilities. From the wellhead to Sandia parking lot is approximately 750 feet. At its longest the flare was 150 feet, and the tip of the flame was about 200 feet from the Sandia parking lot. And one of Sandia’s building isn’t easy.” It turns out, he says, that “Co-locating work groups (from different organizations) is a very important thing. The present arrangement isn’t just what we could fit into the building space. We considered what would be the most productive size of an integrated work group.

Whatever the immediate result, these pioneers from divisions 1000, 2000, 9000, 14,000 — some initially hesitant, some enthusiastic — will help determine a larger company objective: the working arrangements to be finalized next year.

(Continued on page 4)
What’s what

There’s nothing quite like the political season for hype. A presidential campaign TV ad reminded us of that a few days ago. Grumbling inwardly about the prospect of enduring several months of such florid, vacuous fare, I started thinking about advertising versus journalism. And that led to thinking about corporate journalism. Corporate journalism is different from “real” journalism. For example, corporate publications are usually filled with “grasp and grimmer” photos, snapshot-size frames with — oh, maybe a dozen — notables, all smiling out at the reader, wearing hardhats or crowding around someone with giant scissors or throwing shovelfuls of dirt at the photographer. (The Lab News, of course, struggles to avoid those.)

And awards are different, too. Outside the corporate world, writers win Pulitzers, but broadcasters win Peabodys or Emmys, actors get Oscars or Tonys or Golden Globes, scientists are awarded Nobel Prizes, and so forth. But in corporate journalism, there are no ordinary awards. They’re always “prestigious” or “distinguished” or “honored” — the prestigious Elmer D. Fudd Prize for Exceptional Poggem Recycling, or the distinguished Wiley Coyote Award for Lifetime Achievement in Survival, or some such.

With that in mind, the Lab News is accepting nominations for the extraordinary What’s what Gold Medal of Excellence for the Overuse of Superlatives in Journalism. E-mail entries to the address at the bottom of the column. Wondrous prizes could be yours.

... And speaking of superlatives, is there any entertainer of any note who is not a superstar? Well according to at least one Albuquerque news anchor, Britney Spears is not — she’s an “international megastar.”

You have to wonder what order of stardom’s next for her. Solar system splendifera, maybe? ... or, galactic gigagal?

... While we’re still thinking about hype and superlatives, the web pub space.com reported last week that “The finding by the Opportunity Mars rover of a body of gently flowing saltwater translates to shrimp for all.” Did I miss something? Did one of the rovers get its tires wet? Well, no matter. The Long John Silver’s restaurant chain ballyhooed in January that if NASA found conclusive evidence of a Martian ocean, the restaurants would serve up free giant shrimp (isn’t that an oxymoron?).

“They told us 2006’s finding by the Opportunity Mars rover made the market for giant shrimp...” — Michael Padilla

... What Sandia VP has more hats than Captain Kangaroo? And wears ’em — one at a time, of course.

— Howard Kercheval (844-7842, MS 0165, hkerche@sandia.gov)

Sandia, three Texas institutions announce research partnership

Sandia and three University of Texas System institutions in the Dallas-Fort Worth area on March 1 officially formed a partnership aimed at undertaking collaborative research and other joint activities.

Officials gathered at UT Southwestern Medical Center to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining potential areas of joint research, education, technical training, and exchanges among faculty, staff, and students from Sandia, UT Arlington, UT Dallas, and UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Sandia President Paul Robinson helped lead the signing of the MOU.

“This opportunity strengthens Sandia National Laboratory’s long-standing relationship with the University of Texas System,” Paul said. “We are delighted to support UT System investments in higher education, research, and technology at their North Texas institutions. The partnership being created under this memorandum of understanding will accelerate creating a trained, high-tech workforce and new technology that enhance our nation’s economic prosperity and security.”

Mark Yudof, chancellor of the UT System, said the collaborations envisioned by this new partnership will be an important part of the research role of all three UT System institutions in the Metroplex and will create new educational and employment opportunities for students.

“We look forward to a fruitful relationship between these campuses and Sandia, and we are deeply grateful to Sen. Hutchison and others who have helped create this partnership.”

US Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, helped university and laboratory officials celebrate the agreements.

“I’m proud to have worked closely with Sandia and the UT System to bring this partnership to fruition,” Hutchison said. “This type of collaboration between our national labs and higher education will ensure future generations of Americans are poised to further our position on the cutting edge of innovation.”

Collaborative research areas identified in the MOU include: science, engineering, and technology; homeland security; materials research; chemical, thermal, radiation, and biological sensors; chemical and biological weapons threat reduction; computational science and engineering; energy generation, storage, and conversion; microsystems and engineering applications; electrical engineering; chemistry; cell and molecular biology; bioinformatics; and medical devices and biotechnology.

Sandia has had a similar MOU with UT Austin for about two years and had worked with other UT System institutions in various projects. In fiscal year 2003, Sandia had research contracts totaling $887,000 with UT Austin, UT Arlington, UT Dallas, and UT El Paso. The MOU provides tuition reimbursement for employees who attend UT Austin undergraduate and graduate programs, and it provides graduate student research fellowships and contract research opportunities at UT Austin and UT El Paso.

— Michael Padilla
Two new fellowships for the coming fall were created in March with a few strokes of a pen during a signing ceremony at the California site between California Laboratory VP Mim John (8000) and Enrique Lavernia, dean of the College of Engineering at the University of California at Davis. UC Davis is matching the $50,000 in Laboratory Directed Research and Development money that created the opportunity, waiving overhead, and providing tuition so two PhD students will be able to participate.

The Excellence in Engineering fellowships will fund graduate students in the computer security and embedded reasoning research areas. This brings to 42 the number of fellowships and research contracts at 25 universities. The fellowships are part of a strategic outreach plan with key universities, established through the Campus Executive program in 1997 to conduct world-class science, hire world-class scientists and engineers, and develop strategic collaborations in focused research areas.

Sandia executives, acting in the role of ambassadors, are paired with top university officials (usually deans of engineering) at schools that have synergistic research interests and capabilities with Sandia. Mım called the agreement an important partnership for the future. In establishing the fellowship, Sandia hopes to strengthen its partnership with UC Davis to encourage a new generation of scientists and engineers who can contribute to areas of national interest and critical need.

She is transitioning to become Sandia’s UC Davis campus executive, replacing Senior VP Tom Hunter (9000). Advanced Software R&D Dept. 8964 Manager Mike Hardwick is the point of contact for UC Davis interactions, which are facilitated by Norma Hibbs (8524).

Combustion & Physical Sciences Center 8300 Director Bill McLean is leading the effort to increase collaboration with UC Berkeley (where Mım is also the campus executive), UC Davis, and Stanford University (where Executive VP Joan Woodard is the campus executive). On the same day as the signing ceremony, two new fellowships for the coming fall were created at UC Davis.

**FELLOWS TO FOLLOW** — Enrique Lavernia, dean of the College of Engineering at the University of California at Davis, signs an agreement with California Laboratory VP Mim John establishing two Excellence in Engineering fellowships for PhD students funded by Laboratory Directed Research and Development money. (Photo by Bud Pelletier)

**Role of biology in national labs research highlighted**

Len Napolitano lecture cites systems-level approach for basic understanding, practical applications

After describing diabolical disease threats suitable for a segment from the Twilight Zone, Deputy Director Len Napolitano (8140) told his audience at an evening lecture of the Valley Study Group to sleep well because “these threats aren’t here yet — but your 10-year-old will be thinking about this.

He displayed a toy he had ordered designed for children aged 10 and up who could use it to fingerprint DNA by snipping it with enzymes and separating bands on a slab of gel.

“Twenty-five years ago, when I was in college, this was graduate-level work,” Len said. “Now this is Easy Bake Oven stuff. Biology and biotechnology will be as influential in this century as physics and electronics were in the last. What are the national labs doing about it?”

They are modeling the system of functions within cells, understanding the basic science, and developing appropriate technology to speed and facilitate analysis and detection.

“Defenses to such threats would include prevention, interdiction, crisis management, protection (such as vaccination), consequence management (such as medicine or cleanup), and portion. A range of projects at Sandia are developing the science and technology that can contribute to these countermeasures. For instance, the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Decision Analysis Center models attacks for training public health officials and emergency response directors. Basic science projects focus on understanding the role of proteins that regulate what enters cells or activation of the immune system. And the MicroChemLab™ has been developed and fielded to place the capabilities of a full chemical lab into something the size of a small toaster,” Len said.

“What the national labs bring to biology overall is helping provide a broad perspective as biology undergoes a reformation from a science of collecting varieties of organisms, he said, to a more complete systems-level understanding.
Carlsbad

(Continued from page 1)

On Monday, March 15, three people from Sandia/Albuquerque, including Jared Mower (3120), Craig Nimmo (3129), and Johnny Montaño (3137), went to check out the site in Carlsbad and to supervise a temporary remnant into Sandia’s facilities. Johnny was the incident commander and Craig and Jared measured chemicals, gases, and noise.

“In the beginning, the discussions [between leaders] were civil — not hostile, but not necessarily cooperative,” she says. “But from there, we evolved to a state where they were willing to say, ‘Our org is certainly willing to integrate equipment,’ because each had equipment that could help the other.”

Negotiations, she said, were in progress from January to August. “People went from, ‘We’ll go because our directors said we’ll go,’ to, ‘This can be a really great thing.’ They’ve been able to maintain that, and we’re even improving it since they’ve been working together.”

Hallway Interactions

According to MESA deputy program director David Plummer (2330), hallway interactions now allow researchers “to put together disparate ideas from people with wildly different backgrounds.”

“Apparantly the residual gas and chemical levels weren’t bad, but the noise was,” Suzanne says. “It was described as being similar to a jet engine with afterburner ignited.”

On Tuesday, 12 people went into the Sandia buildings, turned on the servers to facilitate remote access, and retrieved other computer and critical files so that employees could work productively in their makeshift spaces.

Also on Tuesday, Les Shephard — six days after the humanx finally took over as VP of Center 6000 — together with Dennis Berry, Director of Nuclear & Risk Technologies Center 6800, and Anthony H. Sanchez, Procured Services Dept. 10256, jumped in to gain concurrence from NNSA’s Sandia Site Office to apply in Carlsbad a policy to allow Sandia contract associates there to charge up to 44 hours for time not worked during the emergency. (This was put in place at the Albuquerque facility after 9/11 due to base closures, but it had never been extended to Carlsbad.) In addition, two other drilling technology experts participated in the EOC meeting.

“Given the circumstances, everything was going well,” Les says. “The Carlsbad team was very resourceful and dealt with the situation in an effective manner. By Monday they understood the nature of what happened and had an action plan to keep productivity as high as possible.”

Suzanne says the evacuation showed how well Sandians work together. Besides gas drilling technology experts, John Palmer (10200), Director of Purchasing, and Anthony H. Sanchez, Procured Services Dept. 10256,

MESA TOP

(Continued from page 1)

in Sandia’s newest building start-up, the Weapons Integration Facility (WIF). The WIF will complete Sandia’s massive MESA project, the largest ever undertaken by the Labs, in 2007.

How close is close enough?

The project’s leaders, under Nuclear Weapons Senior VP Tom Hunter (9000) and Don, had always envisioned a close working relationship among engineering/science analysts and experimentalists, micro engineers, and weapons designers. But determination of the most effective arrangements had yet to be achieved. Put simply, how close is close enough? How threatening is total integration among all groups?

“Success for the project required a kind of group personality adjustment. "In the beginning, the discussions [between leaders] were civil — not hostile, but not necessarily cooperative," she says. “But from there, we evolved to a state where they were willing to say, ‘Our org is certainly willing to integrate equipment,’ because each had equipment that could help the other.”

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Rochelle Lari talks about differences in culture and Iranian post-revolution environment

Rochelle Lari, program leader for Sandia's Diversity Leadership Program, wore the traditional dress of Iran, which includes a mantoo (coat), scarf, and chador (veil) at her Women's History Month talk last week at Los Alamos National Laboratory. She repeated the talk two days later at the VA Hospital in Albuquerque. The chador can be worn various ways such as almost covering or low on the face to hide a woman's hair, said Lari. This report appeared in LANL’s electronic Daily News-bulletin, and republished here by permission of LANL's Public Affairs office.

"We learn through storytelling and my story is about my journey, who I am and who my family is," said Rochelle Lari, program leader for Sandia National Laboratories' Diversity Leadership Program. Lari spoke last week in the Materials Science Laboratory Auditorium for Women's History Month.

"An American Woman in Iran," depicts Lari's personal journey to meet her Iranian immigrant's husband's family.

Lari said she met her husband Mohammad in 1976, while both were attending the University of New Mexico. They dated for four years before marrying in a civil ceremony, then by the church and eventually by tradition. The Laris have been married for 23 years.

To avoid being drafted into the Iranian military, Lari's husband could not return to Iran until he was 40 years old. His first journey home was made alone, but the following year, 1997, the Laris and their two sons traveled to Iran, she said.

Lari's husband has a large family of four brothers and five sisters and many other extended family members, which is similar to Hispanic culture. She learned to prepare for the journey in 1997, Lari said about her husband's family's customs. One Iranian custom, she told the audience, is to provide gifts to all family members of equal value at an initial meeting. To be prepared, Lari compiled a spreadsheet of names and gift ideas such as American clothes and sizes, cosmetics, hair dye, and dishes, she said.

Two weeks of gift packing and eight suitcases later, the family flew to Iran. "Our initial meeting was an instant connection of love; very emotional with kisses on both sides of the cheeks, lots of hugs and excitement," Lari said. "What I've learned is that there are good and bad people everywhere, to challenge assumptions and to strive for responsible journalism, to have compassion and empathy, to have a universal common ground, and the importance of good deeds," Lari said.

Carlsbad
(Continued from preceding page)

ings. They were Norm Warpinski (6116) and John Finger, who recently retired from Sandia. Attorney Ellen Gallegos (11100) provided legal advice.

Paul says the Carlsbad Sandia site pulled through this tough situation with flying colors. "This came at a very challenging time," Paul says. "We had too many deliverables due to the Carlsbad Field Office of DOE with urgent deadlines and we were able to meet them despite what happened. I am very proud of how we pulled together. I am also very grateful for the support we received from many in Carlsbad who volunteered to help us out."

The Sandia Carlsbad site provides scientific and technical advice to the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP), which is currently applying for recertification by the EPA. Sandia staff in Carlsbad have just completed the process of finalizing recertification documents that were presented to the EPA on Friday, March 26, in Washington, D.C.

Suzanne says the Sandia building may be evacuated again for a few hours when some fine work is done on the well.

"This time we will know when it's going to happen. We'll plan ahead and take proper precautions," she says.

According to Lari, upon extending her hand to her sister-in-law's husband he would push her hand away. Lari’s husband later explained to her that she was not supposed to touch him, because he was [Mohammed Lari]'s brother-in-law and technically not Lari’s relative. "I pulled out the spreadsheet and tried to figure out who did I touch and who do I not touch. I learned to let them take the initiative," she said.

Lari said in Iran, family members eat and sleep a lot and food is served on the floor on a long tablecloth. "The food is prepared fresh and there are no prepackaged foods. We drink bottled Coke and everyone sits together," she said. After dinner family members come to visit and everyone sits on the floor on Persian rugs — the same place where we sleep on mats, she added.

Lari described the south of Iran as dry and hot with average temperatures of 127 degrees and the north as beautiful because of the greenery, mountains, and the Caspian Sea. She also said Iran is the only Islamic Republic in the Middle East.

According to Lari, the Islamic Republic requires women to wear a mantoo (coat), scarf, and chador (veil) in public. Lari found it difficult to accept wearing the chador at times, because of its cumbersome nature, especially in the heat, she said. She educated herself by asking family members what the chador represents to each of them. A respected aunt said, "The chador is my space, no one can come into my space unless I let them." Lari's sister-in-law said, "I wear the chador to demonstrate the love for God."

Lari said that today and in the future she and her family will keep their traditions intact including speaking the English, Spanish, and Farsi languages along with their nuclear and extended family values. "What I've learned is that there are good and bad people everywhere, to challenge assumptions and to strive for responsible journalism, to have compassion and empathy, to have a universal common ground, and the importance of good deeds," Lari said.

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Mileposts

Bill Even
25 8760
April 15, 1994
Bert Brown
25 8146
Jose Lopez
25 2113

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California photos by Bud Pellitier

New Mexico photos by Michelle Fleming

Donald Larrichio
20 10257
Dick DeFilma
40 14402
Ed Call
35 8510
Gloria Chavez
25 6927
Kenneth Perano
20 8964

Cyber Enterprise Management gets new home

BLDG. 727 DEDICATION — Todd Bruner explains the monitoring process of the recently completed Cyber Enterprise Management (CEM) Integrated Network Security and Reliability Center (INSRC) in Bldg. 727 at a dedication of the building March 24. INSRC was designed and built to integrate multiple functional areas by bringing together Sandia’s computer and network specialists. This includes the Corporate Computing Help Desk, network and security specialists, various computer technicians/experts, and Computer Security. The heart of the INSRC is the Systems Operations Center, which is equipped with large viewscreens and consoles and will be staffed around the clock starting this summer. Computer specialists will be able to monitor all of Sandia’s networks as well as focus on discrete areas to immediately identify, diagnose, respond, and communicate computing issues. The team will also be able to identify external threats such as worms, viruses, and hackers that may attack the system and quickly isolate, patch, and restore servers and networks. (Photo by Bill Doty)

Recent Retiree

Stuart Kupferman
24 2542

William Davidson
25 9328
Bill Even
25 8760

Jim Rice (9700) accepted the Compañero Recognition Award on behalf of Sandia at the 2004 Quality New Mexico Conference and Awards Ceremony at the Hyatt Regency March 5. Sandia’s award was one of three given this year. The Labs was nominated by Western New Mexico University (2003 Zia Award winner) on the basis of five years of training and mentoring by Gail Willette (9724) from 1994-98. WNMU officials said they would not have started or continued the climb to performance excellence without Sandia’s and Gail’s mentoring. Quality New Mexico’s Compañero recognition promotes partnerships between “experienced quality organizations” that have previously been recognized by the NMQA and those beginning their journey. Sandia received Roadrunner recognition in 1995 and 1998. In addition, two Sandia organizations later received NMQA recognition — Sandia Corporate Quality (2001-Piñon) and Sandia Science and Technology Park (2002-Roadrunner). The Sandia Laboratory Federal Credit Union was a Piñon winner in 2002.

Trinity Site tour is April 3

The National Atomic Museum will conduct its semi-annual Trinity Site tour on Saturday, April 3. Tour buses will leave the museum at 6 a.m. and return around 4 p.m. Participants will be treated to lunch at New Mexico Tech. Cost of the tour is $50 per person. Reservations can be made by calling 242-6083.

Sandia News Briefs

Thomas Reed ‘At the Abyss’ talk April 1 at Sandia, April 3 at Atomic Museum
For those who can’t get to the Thomas Reed colloquium “At the Abyss: An Insider’s History of the Cold War” at 3 p.m. Thursday (April 1) in the Steve Schiff Auditorium (see March 19 Lab News), Reed is giving the same talk Saturday (April 3) at the National Atomic Museum at 10:30 a.m. For reservations call 245-2137 ext 112. We plan to cover Reed’s Sandia talk in our next issue.

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Habitat for Humanity opens ReStore, and everyone wins

Have you recently remodeled your kitchen and wondered what to do with the old cabinets and appliances? You know, the ones that are still in good condition and you wished you knew someone who could use them? ReStore, a new building materials/hardware thrift store, run by the Albuquerque Habitat for Humanity, welcomes receiving them. They will even pick them up.

The store opened last May at 204 San Mateo Blvd. SE, Suite E, an old roller skating rink building. It has 16,000 square feet of building materials, plumbing, hardware, electrical wire, nails, etc. The inventory is not unlike what you would find at a local building supply store.

All the inventory (new and used) is donated by contractors, home builders, and the general public. All proceeds benefit programs of Greater Albuquerque Habitat for Humanity.

What all this means is that now the public can purchase new and used building materials at a greatly reduced price. In addition, by taking your reusables to ReStore instead of the landfill, the environment is spared. Call 217-0130 for donation guidelines. Pickup of donations can be scheduled for Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The store was opened thanks to the donations of Sandia retiree Irv Hall (see Lab News, June 2, 2000), who donated $30,000, and the McCune Foundation. Says Irv, “I am in the final chapters in the Book of Life and I thought this was a worthwhile project. It will be here when I am not.”

The store is open Wednesday through Friday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m-4 p.m. Weekday hours will be extended to 6 p.m. when daylight savings time begins.

— Iris Aboytes

KNME sponsors Science Crawl in Old Town Saturday, April 3

Visit Albuquerque Old Town’s three science museums on Saturday, April 3, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. for KNME TV's Science Crawl. Inspired by the PBS mini-series “Innovation,” which features new technologies and looks at both the questions they raise and the opportunities they provide, Science Crawl is designed to make New Mexicans aware of the richness of science and technology resources and opportunities in our state.

KNME extends a special invitation to students, mid-school and up (and their parents), who might be considering science or technology as a career. Career information will also be available to adults who may be considering a career change.

To participate, buy a passport at the National Atomic Museum, Lodestar, or outside Explora at the Formula 1 race car. Use it to get free admission at the Atomic Museum and Lodestar and reduced admission at Explora. Visit all three museums and get your passport stamped to qualify for a drawing. Prizes include a set of all eight Innovation series programs and museum family memberships.

Events:

National Atomic Museum — “Strange Matter” exhibit and speakers at 12:30, 1:30, and 2:30 p.m.

Lodestar — Booths and free planetarium show with passport

Explora — Special Innovation-themed projects at the Activities Bar

Additional Information:

Linda Kelm at 277-1226 or lkelm@knme.org.


Feedback

Why aren’t Labs’ internal e-directory photos available?

Q: Why aren’t Sandia Directory employee photos visible by default? These photos are underutilized resource that could help employees recognize people in key positions such as ESH coordinators, computer security representatives, building owners, etc. It’s a very minimum, all managers, project leads, and secretaries should be visible.

A: As you noted, not all Sandians have their picture posted in the Sandia Directory. The reason for this is that each employee can make a personal decision as to whether or not to display his or her photo. The current default is not to display the photo to protect employee privacy. Since the IIS [Information Systems Development] organization (9500) owns the Directory database, you can pursue this matter further with them if you wish.— Al West (3100)