Presentation title: Planned Increases in Plutonium at Livermore Lab and Implications for the Community

Short bio: Marylia Kelley is the executive director of the Livermore, California-based Tri-Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment, founded in 1983 to monitor activities at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Marylia brings to Tri-Valley CAREs' program 21 years of in-depth research, writing and facilitating public participation in decisions regarding Livermore Lab and nuclear weapons, waste and cleanup. Marylia serves on the "Community Work Group" (since 1989) to advise the federal Environmental Protection Agency, state agencies and the community on the Superfund cleanup of Livermore Lab. She has provided input to the National Academy of Sciences, including on the National Ignition Facility mega-laser and on toxic and radioactive pollution at the Lab's main site and site 300. She can often be found speaking at diverse venues, from City Council meetings to international conferences. Marylia has written for numerous publications, including a recent cover story in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists on proposed biowafare research at Livermore Lab. Marylia also serves as editor and principal writer for Citizen's Watch, Tri-Valley CAREs' monthly newsletter. In 2002, Marylia was named to the Alameda County Women's Hall of Fame for her work with Tri-Valley CAREs. Marylia has lived in Livermore since 1976.

Presentation Abstract: I will detail new programs that the Department of Energy plans to implement at Livermore Lab over the coming decade and discuss opportunities for community involvement and methods for changing the direction of the Lab. The plans, which are outlined in the Lab's Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement and other documents, include:

-- Increased Storage of Nuclear Materials: The Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement contains plans to more than double the plutonium storage limit at Livermore Lab, from 1,540 pounds to 3,300 pounds, enough for more than 300 nuclear bombs.

-- New Technologies for Plutonium Bomb Core Manufacturing: The report proposes to make Livermore Lab the place to design and test new technologies for producing "pits" (plutonium bomb cores) for nuclear weapons.

-- Plutonium Atomic Vapor Laser Isotope Separation: Livermore Lab plans to heat plutonium and then shoot laser beams through the radioactive vapor cloud to separate plutonium isotopes for various weapons experiments. To do this, the Lab will increase the existing limit for the amount of plutonium that can be used in any one room at a time, from 44 pounds to 132 pounds. This is a 3-fold increase. Pursuing this new technology has both community health and international nuclear proliferation implications.

-- Plutonium Experiments in the National Ignition Facility: Livermore Lab plans to add plutonium, highly-enriched uranium and lithium hydride to the mix of experiments to be conducted in the National Ignition Facility when its construction is completed. These experiments will increase the mega-laser's utility for weapons research while adding to its environmental and nuclear proliferation risks. Moreover, there are new plans to manufacture radioactive tritium targets for the mega-laser on site at the Lab, which will increase the amount of tritium allowed to be "at risk" at a time in one room nearly 10-fold, from just over 3 grams to 30 grams.

-- Enhancing Readiness to Conduct Full-Scale Nuclear Tests: Plans call for "enhancing readiness" a return to full-scale underground nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site by developing new diagnostics at Livermore Lab. Full-scale nuclear tests were halted in 1992.

Livermore Lab has never been able to keep its contamination inside the fence line. Today, both the main site in Livermore and site 300 near Tracy are Superfund cleanup sites. Elevated levels of plutonium have been found in Livermore parks to the west of the Lab, and plutonium has been found in an off-site air monitor to the east of the Lab. High levels of tritium have been measured in rainfall and agricultural products. If these proposed, new programs go forward there will be more accidents and releases, posing threats to Lab workers, ourselves and our children. And, research shows that cancer is only the tip of the iceberg. Many illnesses may result. Stopping these programs -- and changing the future direction of Livermore Lab -- is key to preventing further health and environmental damage to our community.

Marylia Kelley
Executive Director
Tri-Valley CAREs
(Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)
2582 Old First Street
Livermore, CA USA 94551

http://www.trivalleycares.org - is our web site address. Please visit us there!

(925) 443-7148 - is our phone
(925) 443-0177 - is our fax