

"Reaching Out From a Common Experience"

Greetings from a unique group of people - the retirees of the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Laboratory Retiree Group (LRG) is a non-profit corporation which seeks to maintain communications with and to serve the needs and interests of the nearly 3500 retirees from LANL. If you wish to join our organization, an application is available in this newsletter. For more information, please contact our President Charles R. Mansfield, coyote2@swcp.com or by mail at P. O. Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544

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Health Issues

By Glenn Lockhart

Open Enrollment for 2011 is coming up quickly. My guess as to the schedule follows (I have not yet been able to obtain information from LANL) -

Late September: Receive Open Enrollment materials;

Early October: Public Meetings for retirees (Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Pojoaque, Los Alamos);

October 24 – November 18: Open Enrollment Period (On Line, telephone, and by mail;

December 31: absolute last date to change plans (telephone only).

I do not know of a change in benefits, but do anticipate a change (up or down) in premiums (the present premium is calculated as 20% of the estimated medical and drug costs). There is a slim chance that they will remain the same.

LRG has received an opinion from our Labor Law attorney that our best approach to reverse DOE's requirement for calculating the retiree's premium as 20% of the estimated medical and drug costs is to appeal to the LANL/DOE/Congress (see George Chandler's article in the current *Main Gate* on how to do this).

With baby boomers turning 65 and eligible for Medicare at that age, I have drafted a document which outlines what actions are needed (see separate article in the current *Main Gate*). It is still in draft form, but I would be happy to send you a copy by e-mail.

Do you have a problem with health insurance, pensions, or long term care insurance, call Glenn Lockhart at (505) 672-3784, e-mail mandmlockhart@cs.com, or snail mail at 91 Mimbres Drive, Los Alamos, NM 87544.

Turning 65?

By Glenn Lockhart

1. If you are receiving a Social Security payment, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) will send you a Medicare Card automatically enrolling you in Hospital (Part A) and Medical (Part B). You should receive the card about three (3) months before you are eligible for Medicare.

You have a choice to disenroll from Part B, **BUT you may lose your employer or union coverage if you disenroll.** Contact your employer or union benefits office if you want to disenroll from Part B. Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and Tricare for Life require enrollment in Part B if you are eligible for Part A without a premium.

2. If you are **NOT** receiving a Social Security payment, contact Social Security (1-800-772-1213) four months before the month in which you turn 65 and set up an appointment to apply for Medicare and Social Security. You may be eligible on your account or the account of a spouse (or a former spouse).

EVERYONE is eligible for Medicare Part B when they turn 65, even if they are NOT eligible for Part A. If you do not enroll at age 65 and subsequently become eligible for Medicare Part A (usually from working or on a spousal account), LANL requires you to enroll in Part B and you may pay a penalty (10% for each 12 month period that you did not enroll in Part B after age 65). If you do not enroll when you are 65, you can only enroll in Part B during the Open Enrollment period (January – March), which means that the penalty stops running on the following July 1.

If you are still working (not retired) and are covered by an employer or union plan, you do not need to enroll in Part B until you actually terminate employment. Then you have 60 days (Special Enrollment Period) to enroll in Part B without penalty.

If you are not eligible for enrollment in Medicare Part A without paying a premium, LANL requires a letter from Social Security stating that you do not qualify for Medicare Part A without paying a premium. If you are a LANL retiree, contact Hewitt Associates (1-866-934-1200) to find out where to send a copy of this letter. If you are not a LANL retiree, contact your employer or union office.

3. If you are enrolled in an employer or union prescription drug plan which provides “creditable coverage,” you do not need to enroll in an individual Medicare Part D plan unless you lose your coverage under the employer or union plan. CMS regards coverage which is as good as or better than an individual Part D plan as “creditable coverage.” All of the LANL plans and Tricare for Life are “creditable coverage.” Employers and unions are required to notify you annually as to the applicability of “creditable coverage” for their plans. Contact the employer or union plan benefits office if you do not know if their plan is “creditable coverage.”

4. If you are **NOT** enrolled in an employer or union prescription drug plan which provides “creditable coverage,” then you need to enroll in an individual Part D plan. The plans available in your state are printed in the back of the *Medicare and You* booklet which can be obtained from the local Social Security Office. I have a spreadsheet which expedites choosing Part D plans available in New Mexico.

5. For LANL retirees, enrolling in Medicare is a Qualifying Event which allows you to change your individual LANL coverage between Open Enrollment periods. You should receive a document from Hewitt Associates not less than thirty (30) days before the month in which you turn 65. If you do not receive the document and wish to change your coverage, call Hewitt at 1-866-934-1200. You and your dependents can be on different plans.

6. If you do not have health care insurance from an employer, union, or Tricare for Life, you may want to enroll in a Medicare Supplement (Medigap) program. These plans are approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) and are labeled Plan A through Plan N. Plan F has the best benefits, but also costs more. Call the NM Public Regulation Commission Insurance Division (1-800-947-4722) if you live in New Mexico or the state agency which regulates insurance companies for your state of residence. to obtain a list of companies offering Medigap plans in your state. AARP offers plans in all states (administered by United Health Care).

7. Medicare Crossover is a process benefiting providers in New Mexico. This process provides for CMS to electronically forward claim information to the Plan Administrator (currently Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico) without having providers wait for Medicare to pay, then filing a claim. Unfortunately, the process does not work well for providers outside New Mexico. Providers outside New Mexico must wait for Medicare to pay, then file a claim with the Blue Cross/Blue Shield carrier in their state.

If you are covered by a LANL plan, call Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico (1-877-878-5266) in your birth month (the month in which you are covered by Medicare) and make sure that you are enrolled in Medicare Crossover.

*Best wishes.
Glenn*

This document was prepared by Glenn Lockhart, Co-chair of the Health Issues Committee of The Laboratory Retiree Group, Inc. (LRG) and a SHIP (State Health Insurance Program) Volunteer Counselor with the New Mexico Aging and Long Term Care Services Department. Glenn is solely responsible for the contents of this document.

Questions may be directed to Glenn Lockhart, (505) 672-3784 or mandmlockhart@cs.com.



Actions You Can Take on the Health Care Premiums

The LRG Health Care Premium Working Committee has been studying possible legal actions LANL retirees could take to force DOE/NNSA to roll back the premiums we are being charged for health care. While we are reviewing those options we believe that it would be useful for LRG members to contact our congressional delegation and ask them to put pressure on DOE/NNSA to reduce or eliminate the premiums charged to retirees.

We understand that LANL and the DOE never promised us free health care. But we believe that over the years we were assured by LANL, DOE/NNSA, and the University of California that we would always be offered health care on the same basis as other UC retirees, with DOE/NNSA picking up the tab where the UC retirees are subsidized by the California legislature.

The California legislature subsidizes UC health care premiums at a certain level per employee or retiree. The various campuses of UC then apply that subsidy to the premiums charged for their health care plans, which may be quite different among the campuses. The premiums charged LANL employees and retirees were always more or less consistent with this policy.

When LANS took over LANL, DOE/NNSA decided to ask LANS to provide the health care insurance that

we retirees are entitled to under the UCRP. So far so good, most of us thought that was a good idea. But last year the DOE/NNSA decided to reduce its subsidy of the premiums charged employees, and most significantly, to subsidize retirees at the same rate. The DOE/NNSA subsidy turned out to be significantly less than the subsidy that California gives retirees under UCRP, and so we believe that DOE/NNSA and LANL have reneged on the promise they made us.

Not all of us are severely impacted by this new policy as others. Right now we're paying about 20% of the premiums. For many of us it's not a big deal yet, whereas some of us are feeling the pinch now. But we see this as a trend, and that the percentage we are asked to pay will increase as time goes on, and more of us will become impacted in later years as the share of the premium we are asked to pay increases.

The Committee urges all members of LRG to write letters to our Congressman and Senators asking them to work on our behalf to roll back this policy, and require the DOE/NNSA to subsidize health care premiums at the same level that California does for other UC retirees. The Board of Directors endorsed this approach at their July 20 meeting. It's only fair. You can find the addresses for Congressmen and Senators in the Monitor and on-line.

-George Chandler

The Great Billboard Eradication “Mystery”

By Michael Lyon

On August 2, 1950, regular motorists on the Taos-Santa Fe highway probably had an odd, perhaps mildly disconcerting feeling. Something was different. Something was just not right. But what was it? What was it? And then it came to them. Weren't there billboards right about here? Where were the billboards? The billboards were gone! You see, during the previous night, someone or some ones had cut down five billboards along the highway.

And so the Great Billboard Mystery of 1950 was created. The police had no clues. There were no eye witnesses. There was one ear witness, Dave Alvord, who was awakened by the sound of ax blows. But Dave undoubtedly would not have been able to identify the perpetrators in a sound lineup.

Who had done such a thing? And why? Was it members of a local pueblo, angry of the desecration of sacred lands for crass commercial purposes? Was it a group of environmental vigilantes, angry at the visual pollution of beautiful New Mexico scenery? The *Santa Fe New Mexican* of August 3, 1950, identified vandalism-minded tourists (a roving band of Hell's Angels?) as among the possible suspects. Could a flying saucer have landed and aliens using ray guns

cut down these billboards, for purposes earthlings could not understand? Quien sabe? The billboard vigilantes, whoever they were, were never caught. And this was long before members of such outlaw conspiracies called the media to claim “credit” for their acts while simultaneously issuing a list of impossible demands. Were I a cold-case detective going through the old files, I'd want to check where Edward Abbey and the Monkey Wrench Gang were on the night in question.

Was there a Los Alamos connection? Decades later, I talked to a lab retiree, whom I will not name to protect the innocent. And possibly, the guilty. He told me he had talked to at least one of the perpetrators, and they were indeed from Los Alamos, and employed at that time by the Laboratory. He told me it was an organized group, and they had posted lookouts with walkie-talkies to warn the lumberjack crew if a stray car came along the highway in the early morning hours. And it was a crew, as one man could not have possibly cut down five billboards in one night.

Well, there you have it. The Great Billboard Eradication Mystery partially solved, if you can believe this third-hand information. The perpetrators, if any are still alive, would have to be in their eighties and nineties, but conceivably, one of them could be reading this newsletter. Anyone want to fess up?



Photo by Jack Clifford

Post-Fire Thank You at the Famous “Rock” at White Rock After the Las Conchas Fire



LOS ALAMOS AIRPORT DAMAGED BY LIGHTNING

By Chuck Mansfield

To top off the Las Conchas excitement, the Los Alamos Airport was hit by lightning on July 30. The refinishing of the Los Alamos airport was nearly completed by Saturday, July 30. A series of operations nearly completed. First, the old layer of the runway (street for aircraft) had been ground off. Second a new, hot layer of asphalt was applied and rolled. New center lines, edge marking and turnout paths were painted. The second to last step was to cut 1/4 inch grooves across the runway to channel water off of the surface. The final step would have been placing a second layer of paint on the runway markings. The thunderstorm on Saturday afternoon changed the planning. Lightning struck the runway about 700 ft from the west end and blew two holes in the surface. Observers said that flames came from the hole for about 10 seconds. The two holes, over three inches deep, were serious enough to cause severe damage to aircraft. The meter stick in the photograph gives a sense of scale to the damaged area. Debris from the explosion was found on the highway south of the runway. No damage to aircraft was been reported. Work to make temporary repairs were completed by Sunday afternoon. As a result, the airport was reopened for all service including air ambulance and several aircraft returning from the airshow at Oshkosh, WI. on Sunday evening. A complete resurfacing of the damaged area will be completed later.





Some could find beauty in Las Conchas Fire, June 27, 2011

Photo by Jessica Bard

Submitted by Annie Bard



Ugly Las Conchas Fire

Photo Submitted by Annie Bard



**Pacheco Canyon Fire, Santa Fe National Forest,
June 19, 2011 4:47pm**

Photo taken from Tesuque by Richard J. Young



**Los Alamos Canyon trail footbridge located just west of old Main Gate
Entrance to Los Alamos**

Photo by: John Guenette, Submitted by Jack Clifford

Overview of Fire and Wildfires

by Charles R. Mansfield

Three things are required to create fire: Fuel, Oxygen and Heat. In elementary fire control these three things are presented as labels on the side of a triangle. The point of this image is that in order to extinguish a fire only one side of the triangle needs to be broken. If water is squirted on a fire two things can happen. First, heat is removed from the fire by evaporation and second the water vapor may remove enough oxygen to prevent further combustion. However, the same effect can be created by a shovel full of dirt. In fact if a fire is burning in light fuels such as grass the branch of a small tree can be used as a broom. While the inrush of extra air provides more oxygen, enough heat is removed to extinguish the flame. Have you ever blown out a candle flame or a match? It's the same effect. The fuel can be removed from a wildfire by scratching the duff and debris ahead of the flame and letting the fire burn up to the band of mineral soil. Some fire extinguishers work by flooding the flame with enough carbon dioxide that the oxygen is removed. Other fire extinguisher types such as Haylon interfere with the combustion process.

A few simple measurements have been used for many years to estimate the danger of wildfire. These data, taken together, yield a quantity called the "Burning Index Value (BIV)." The data include the time of day, temperature, humidity, rainfall and atmospheric pressure. In addition, the weight of a standard array of wood dowels is an indicator to the amount of moisture contained in light fuels. The fuel weight and temperature are coupled to some degree since the change of weight is related to the moisture of the standard sample. The fire weather data used to be gathered at a large number of sites. The sites included Lookout Stations, Fire Guard Stations and Ranger

Stations. As a result the data from 20 to 30 locations yielded average information over a National Forest. However, as the temperature increases the highly combustible volatile materials are driven out of the wood into the atmosphere. The experiments conducted by the forest fire research laboratories at Missoula, MT and Atlanta, GA coupled with the daily data yield very useful information on the danger that a fire might occur. A much newer index of fire behavior which you may see from time to time is the "Energy Release Component". While this index may be of use in predicting the possible outcome of a very large fire it may not have a fine enough detail to predict the progression and outcome of a fire when the fire starts.

So far extinguishing a fire can seem to be an easy task. However, the above information basically concerns the ignition of a fire. For the next step consider a small campfire. Your object is getting warm and toasting marshmallows. First, notice that the flames extend for some distance above the wood in your fire. Flames mean that something is burning. All sorts of chemicals are emitted when wood is heated. Wood alcohol is one of those chemicals. Also a class of molecules called terpenes is being burned. Turpentine is one type of terpene. If you go into a forest on a warm day the smell of the forest is due to these compounds that are being evaporated from the plants in the forest. A pine forest smells differently from a fir forest. Why? Pines and firs have a different mix of volatile molecules. Even the duff (stuff on the forest floor) is emitting some of these compounds. All of this "stuff" burns. The difference is the flashpoint (the temperature at which the "stuff" bursts into flame).

In general more gas comes out of a fire than air flowing into the fire. This gas is lighter (less dense) so it rises quickly. However, if there is a light breeze the columns of flame (as well as the smoke and unburned "stuff")

are blown with the wind. It isn't your shining personality that is attracting the smoke; it's that burning gasses as well as the smoke travel with the wind. The smoke seems to follow you because your body is causing eddies to form which collect on your downwind side. The point of this is that the column of flames follows the wind. In turn the heating of fuels near the campfire is heated and this increases the chance that those materials will burst into flame. Radiation from the flames raises the temperature ahead of a fire. If the fire is on a hillside the fuels uphill from the fire are heated more than the material on level ground. Fire does burn uphill faster than on level ground. In extreme cases the flames of the original fire may contact unburned fuel as cause it to burst into flame.

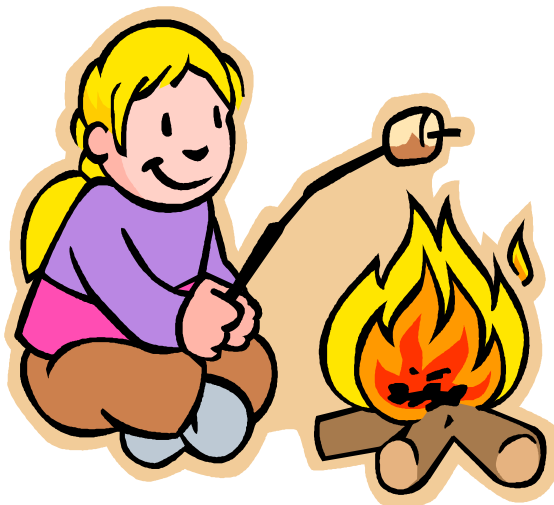
Often you will notice that sparks are coming off of your campfire. These sparks can not only burn small holes in your tent but, under the right conditions, they may set fire to unburned material outside of your fire circle. In extreme cases larger pieces of burning material may be picked up by the fire and deposited some distance downwind. (We found pieces of burned bark in our yard during the Las Conchas fire.) In extreme cases, burning limbs and larger pieces may spread a wildfire a mile or more ahead of

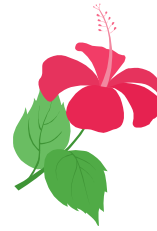
the main wildfire. I have no doubt that this was happening during the Las Conchas fire.

Moisture in fuels is driven off in the form of water vapor. If you try to start you campfire in a rainstorm it is much more difficult than on a hot, dry day. You must first raise the surface temperature of your firewood above the boiling point before it can reach the ignition temperature or find a source of fine, dry kindling to get the larger pieces of wood burning.

There are many ways in which a wildfire can start. In the case of the Las Conchas fire a dead aspen tree was blown across a power line. Since extreme fire danger conditions existed that day, the arc from the power line started the fire. Lightning can start a fire; however, since there is often rain associated with a thunder storm there is a good chance that the fire may be delayed in reaching an uncontrollable state.

"Sleeper" fires may smolder for several days before they start to get out of control. More often wildfires are caused by human carelessness. A smoldering root ignited by a campfire can take some time to reach the surface. Several fires in New Mexico were caused by parking a vehicle in dry grass. The catalytic converter often operates at a red heat so one dry blade can be ignited. There is even a chance that a broken bottle can focus sunlight on very dry fuel and ignite the fuel.





IN MEMORIAM

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Edward J. Velarde, Sr.
John F. Barnes, III
Wilma I. Moxley
Benjamin W. Wilkirson
John (Jack) McComb

*Also: Francoise A. Ulam, Mary Jeanne Nilsson

* (People who were well known to the Los Alamos community)

Have you been places or done things? Do you have thoughts or concerns that you would like to share with your fellow retirees? Want to submit an article for the next *Main Gate*? Just take a few minutes to send it to us via snail mail or email.

SCAM Warning

Theft of Personal Information

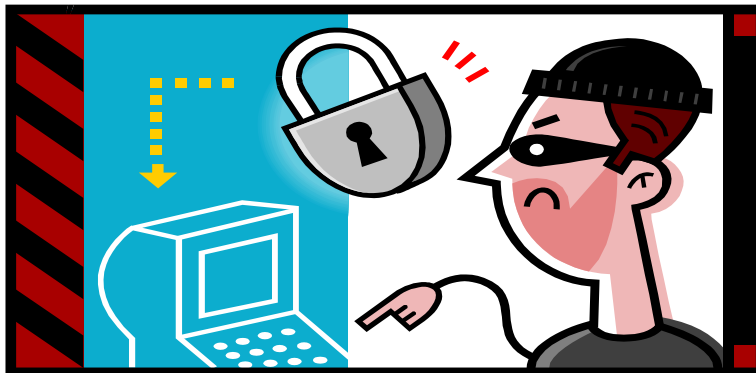
-Chuck Mansfield

Global thieves are continually fishing, or *phishing*, as it's better known, for your information.

If you receive a phone call or email from your bank, credit card companies, internet provider, a charity you support, or any business you know or don't know, and if they ask for money or inform you that your account has a problem, don't "fall for it." If an email, forward the email to your ISP with caution that this may be a scam or ask them about a safe way to get the oath info header on the file. Also, consumer protection division of New Mexico would like to have information (they seem to be ready to sink in their teeth to investigating these scam attempts.)

Most probably the email or phone call is coming from someone who wants your checking account number, credit card number, password, or other personal, info that could be used to harm you. If concerned, phone the company who just phoned or emailed you using the telephone number on the back of your credit card or utility bill, etc., and ask if there really is a problem.

This just happened to one retiree (not me), but a fellow member of "the trusting generation."



Los Alamos Retiree Group--Application for Membership

The Laboratory Retiree Group, Inc. is comprised of

- **Active Members** who have retired under a retirement system of a prime contractor to the DOE operated Los Alamos National Laboratory; have been employed at LANL, and have paid the dues.
- **Friends** are those persons who wish only to receive the newsletter. Their dues are \$15.00/yr

Please fill out the application and mail it with your check to LRG, Inc., PO Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544.

The LRG board voted to provide 2011 gratis because the *Main Gate* and *Directory* were not published. 2012 Dues will be due January 2012.

*** If you paid dues for 2010, you are automatically paid to January, 2012...All people who paid \$12 for 2010 need not pay for 2011 .**

<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> Friend (non LRG member receives newsletters)
— \$12/yr.	— \$12/yr.	— \$15/yr
<input type="checkbox"/> Change of Address		<input type="checkbox"/>

(When entering names please put last name first.)

Lab. Retiree: _____, _____ Year Retired: _____

UCRP: _____ PERS: _____ OTHER (specify _____)

Spouse: _____, _____ LANL Retiree? N__ Y__

Year Retired: _____

Friend: _____, _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Telephone: (____) _____ Fax or E-mail: _____

Please make your check, which will serve as your receipt, payable to **LRG, Inc.** and mail to: LRG, Inc., PO Box 546, Los Alamos, NM 87544. Sorry, but we are unable to accept credit cards at this time.

Check #: _____ Date: _____ Amount \$: _____

I WISH TO BE LISTED IN THE LABORATORY RETIREE DIRECTORY: Y__ N__

- A current Laboratory Retiree Directory is being updated and will be mailed later to all LRG members. Please make sure LRG has your correct address.

Laboratory Retiree Group
LRG, Inc.
PO Box 546
Los Alamos, NM 87544

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED