

**Environmental Restoration (ER) Project  
Cerro Grande Fire  
Accelerated Action Information Sheet**

**Potential Release Site (PRS) 18-003(b)  
Septic System and Drain Field**

*Technical Area (TA)-18 is located off Pajarito Road near the confluence of Pajarito Canyon and Threemile Canyon. The principal activities at TA-18 are the design, construction, research, development, and application of experiments that involve chain reactions of atoms splitting fast enough to be self-sustaining (called nuclear criticality).*

**PRS History:** PRS 18-003(b) is an inactive septic system that served Building 18-23, Kiva I. The system received sanitary wastes and wash water from 1947 to 1995. The PRS includes the septic tank, inlet line, discharge line, and drain field. The reinforced concrete septic tank has an estimated capacity of 650 gallons. A large wooden baffle is located at each end of the tank. The drain field consists of four drain lines. The drain field is shared with PRS 18-003(a). Water service to the restroom in Kiva I has been shut off and the doors locked. The sewer lines leading from the facility have not been plugged. In 1996, the contents of the tank were removed and the tank interior was pressure washed as part of an interim cleanup action.

ER Project personnel sampled the tank contents, surface and subsurface soils adjacent to the drain lines and the tank, and soils and alluvial groundwater from temporary wells near the drain field at PRS 18-003(b) in 1993 and 1994, as part of a field investigation. The contents of the tank were sampled in 1996 and again in 1997. ER Project personnel conducted an Interim Action in 1997 to remove the contents of the tank and pressure wash its interior. Additionally, soil samples were collected adjacent to the tank in 1997.

PRS 18-003(b) is listed on the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments module of the Laboratory's Hazardous Waste Facility permit. ER Project personnel have not proposed the site for no further action, and there are indications of residual risk at the site because of the potential for hazardous materials in the environment.



**Issues of Concern:** The area upstream of PRS 18-003(b) burned during the Cerro Grande fire (a fire intensity rating of low to high). The drain field may be subject to erosion or scouring, and ER Project personnel observed on June 30, 2000, that the area had flooded. There may be surface or near-surface contamination associated with the drain field. The drain field is also a potential obstruction to future flood-related activities at the site. There is no debris on the site that could enter the flood watercourse.

**Accelerated Action Status:** PRS 18-003(b) is part of a voluntary corrective measures plan designed to

- Collect supplemental surface and subsurface soil samples,
- Determine the nature and extent of soil contamination (if present) from the supplemental data,
- Assess the potential human health and ecological risks, and
- Clean up the site by excavation, if necessary.

Removing inactive septic tank systems that occupy canyon-bottom settings is an ER Project best management practice designed to mitigate potential environmental issues. The voluntary corrective measures plan indicates that the tank at PRS 18-003(b) will be removed.

**Related Documents:** November 2, 1995; VCM Plan, March 17, 1999; LANL 1995, 52183; LANL 1997, 55120.2