



## DOE-EM, Los Alamos National Laboratory Preserve America's Nuclear Knowledge Base



*Team members at the Denver Federal Center are shown after loading archive material for secure transport to Los Alamos National Laboratory in August. Photo Courtesy DOE/EM*

---

### DOE/EM NEWS

A little-known team of experts at the Denver Federal Center and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is preserving America's nuclear weapons research, a commitment that involves capturing, organizing, and digitizing decades of information.

Hundreds of boxes sit at the Denver center, filled with hard copies of data, reports, laboratory notebooks, welding procedures, and technical illustrations. The boxes came from all over the U.S. nuclear complex, including [Rocky Flats](#), [Mound](#), [Pinellas](#), and other Department of Energy Environmental Management ([EM](#)) field sites after their successful closures.

The Rocky Flats Plant in Golden, Colorado was a large manufacturing hub that churned out the majority of the nuclear weapon pits that still exist in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. The site's weapons mission ended in the early 1990s and most of its records sat in storage until recent years.

[Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center](#) (EMCBC) Classification Officer Jill McLaughlin and Classification Program Manager Lisa Fulks recently hosted a 14-member LANL team at the Denver center. The team included personnel from plutonium operations, security, and logistics tasked with packaging and shipping 519 boxes of classified records and media from the Denver center to LANL.



NOVEMBER 10, 2020

The successful shipment of boxes was completed in late August, reducing the inventory of classified materials at the center by a third. The shipment filled a special large tractor-trailer truck.

The team is set to perform a complete document inventory, digitize the contents of the boxes, and create an archive library.

“We are working as fast as we can to provide access to the entire collection of nuclear weapons manufacturing and research records,” said Dr. Robert Putnam, a chief scientist at LANL. “The work we’re doing is critical to preserving America’s nuclear knowledge. We need to ensure that the next generation has access to historical information. If you’ve never been taught to run procedures for a nuclear facility, we’re ensuring you can learn from history.”

In fiscal 2020, Joe Watts, LANL project manager, organized 1.7 terabytes of other related electronic classified information — equivalent to about 130 million pages of information, an amount that would fill more than 2,000 file cabinets — and provided the LANL Weapons Programs and EMCBC Classification Office access to it.

That electronic recovery resulted in several million dollars of cost savings for the DOE weapons programs. LANL canceled a planned plutonium metallurgy study when experimental data from Rocky Flats answered the scientific questions asked by weapon design engineers. Elimination of the experiments saved funding and schedule time, and reduced potential radiation exposures for workers.

The EMCBC Classification Office has been working with Watts for more than two years to prepare for the upcoming transfer of classified documents in both electronic and hard-copy form from the Denver center.

“We greatly appreciate the valuable efforts of the LANL team, and look forward to continuing the positive work relationship as the recovery and digitization of the documents continue,” said Jack Zimmerman, director of the EMCBC. “Mr. Watts’ leadership has been innovative and adaptable despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

While the EMCBC Classification Office focuses on classification reviews for various EM field sites such as the [Waste Isolation Pilot Plant](#), [Los Alamos Field Office](#), [Nevada Program](#), [West Valley Demonstration Project](#), [Energy Technology Engineering Center](#), and [Separations Process Research Unit](#), the office also works to release non-classified documents to EM field sites, the DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM), and the greater public in support of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and other matters.

The office also releases scientific and technical information as required. Digitization of the contents from the Denver center boxes will enable quicker responses by EMCBC and LM for public releases.

The joint EMCBC-LANL team will continue to coordinate efforts to inventory the collection at the Denver center, declassify contents where possible, update classification markings, and digitize the collection with robust metadata that will enable rapid keyword searches.



# Los Alamos Reporter

*The News from Los Alamos & Beyond*

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

The project, including digital conversion, is expected to take months, but once complete, will provide secure electronic access to scientists, engineers, training professionals, FOIA programs, record managers, librarians, historians, and other interested parties.