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NEWS RELEASE

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Loco Hills Brine Well Collapses

SANTA FE, NM – A brine well collapsed today in Eddy County near Loco Hills. This morning the Loco Hills Water Disposal Company reported to the Oil Conservation Division that there were early indications of a collapse. By 2:30 pm today, the operator reported a cave-in of approximately 50 feet across with an estimated depth of 30 feet. The brine well, BW-21, is located 150 feet from County Road 217 near Loco Hills, Sec. 16, Township 17 South, 30 East. Local, county, and state officials have been notified and County Road 217 has been closed.

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary Joanna Prukop ordered a statewide review, internal audit and inspection of all existing brine wells in New Mexico last summer following a brine well collapse near Artesia that created a sinkhole over 400 feet across. That collapse caused immense concern as to how brine wells are managed by their operators and their apparent lack of oversight.

“The Artesia brine well collapse sounded the alarm on how these wells are managed by operators and the need for consistent monitoring,” stated Secretary Prukop. “The Loco Hills well was shut-in because of the Oil Conservation Division’s findings regarding its mechanical integrity. Its collapse may lead us to shut-in others if indications warrant.”

The Loco Hills Brine well had been closed and plugged three months ago when it failed an Oil Conservation Division mechanical integrity test, as part of Secretary Prukop’s statewide inspection and review. Since the Artesia brine well collapse, all brine well operators are required to conduct daily inspections.

“These inspections are working, because the operator detected subsidence before the collapse actually occurred,” stated Wayne Price, Environmental Bureau Chief for the Oil Conservation Division.

The Oil Conservation Division will continue to monitor and investigate the collapse of this brine well.

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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.

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