



## Nevada Site Office News

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### **Unicorn Subcritical Experiment Scheduled**

The *Unicorn* subcritical experiment will be conducted on August 30, 2006, at the Nevada Test Site.

Los Alamos National Laboratory is conducting the experiment to gather scientific data that provides critical information to maintain the safety and reliability of the nation's nuclear weapons without having to conduct underground nuclear tests.

The last subcritical experiment, *Krakatau*, was conducted on February 23, 2006. *Unicorn* will be the 23<sup>rd</sup> subcritical experiment conducted since they began in July 1997.

Subcritical experiments examine the behavior of plutonium as it is strongly shocked by forces produced by chemical high explosives. Subcritical experiments produce essential scientific data and technical information used to help maintain the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile. The experiments are subcritical; that is, no critical mass is formed and no self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction can occur; thus, there is no nuclear explosion.