

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary
Todd E. Leahy, JD, PhD, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Adrienne Sandoval, Oil Conservation Division Director

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Contact: Sidney Hill
Public Information Officer, EMNRD
Phone: 505-629-7403
Email: sidney.hill@state.nm.us



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Delegation from Brazil to Tour Carlsbad Brine Well Remediation Site
Petrochemical company executives seeking solutions for similar problems in their country

Santa Fe, NM – Representatives from global petrochemical company Braskem, based in Brazil, are coming to New Mexico to learn about the successful remediation of the Carlsbad Brine Well. The visit will take place Wednesday, October 26, 2022.

The Carlsbad Brine Well Remediation Project, substantially completed in June of 2022, was a years-long effort to prevent the collapse of an unstable brine cavern that had been created underground near a major transportation intersection within Carlsbad's city limits in Eddy County. The cavity was the result of activity from a brine well—a well that produced salt-laden water for use in oil drilling operations—that had operated in the area from 1978 to 2008.

The Oil Conservation Division (OCD) of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department ordered the brine well shut down in 2008, after two other brine wells sharing similar characteristics in southeast New Mexico had collapsed earlier that year. The potential damage from a collapse of the Carlsbad brine well was estimated to be more than \$1 billion because of its proximity to a main irrigation canal, a major highway intersection, a rail line, and numerous businesses and residences.

Following the well's shutdown and the bankruptcy of its owner, OCD continued to monitor the location while also working with state, local, and county officials to raise the necessary funds to stabilize the cavity. Ultimately, OCD contracted with the engineering firm WSP, which designed and implemented the successful remediation plan. Though the remediation project was substantially completed in June of this year, OCD and WSP personnel continue to work through the conclusion of the remediation phase and will continue monitoring the site for the next two years.

Garnered global recognition

This successful project has garnered attention around the globe, including in the offices of Braskem, which is dealing with its own underground brine well cavities. The most notable emerged under the city Maceio on Brazil's eastern coast following heavy rains and an earthquake in 2018. That cavity made the ground so unstable that roads and buildings started to fracture, ultimately forcing more than 25,000 residents out of their homes.

That level of disaster was averted in Carlsbad, which is one of the reasons the Braskem officials want to visit the site to learn from New Mexico's success. They will be joined on the visit by a group from Sabine Storage & Operations of Houston, which provides engineering services to Braskem.

"Remediation of the Carlsbad Brine Cavity is a signature project for the State of New Mexico, the local Carlsbad community and WSP," said WSP Project Manager Dan Kwiecinski. "This project has gained global recognition and we are pleased to host Sabine Storage and Braskem representatives from Brazil for a tour of the project as we enter the post-closure monitoring phase."

“We are very grateful for [EMNRD’s] openness and interest in sharing technical information on such an important and timely issue,” said Sabine Storage President Jose Pereira.

Officials from OCD, WSP, Sabine and Braskem will be available to media from noon to 12:30 on Wednesday, October 26, at the project site—3005 South Canal Street.

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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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