UNEP SEMINAR: March 6th in WEB 2230 @ 4:35 pm
NUCL 5999; NUCL 6999; NUCL 7999

An overview of the Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program (AMRP) and its involvement with closing abandoned uranium mines

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Abstract
Mining has gone on in Utah for a long time. Native Americans, Mexicans, and Spaniards mined before the arrival in 1847 of the Mormons, who were the first white settlers. Right from the first, Mormons mined a little. They dug for coal to heat their homes. They mined iron to make farm tools, pots and pans, and nails. They used lead to make bullets. Mining really began to develop in Utah after the transcontinental railroad, which stretched across the country, was finished in 1869. The railroad meant that large amounts of minerals could easily be shipped to market and sold. Mines sprang up all over Utah. You can still see old mines everywhere. For instance, they are in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons and in the Oquirrh Mountains near Salt Lake City; near Park City; at Mercur west of Salt Lake; and at Silver Reef in southern Utah by St. George. By the turn of the century mining was a major industry in Utah, second only to agriculture. Silver was the most important early metal. Gold and zinc and lead were also mined a lot. In the 1890’s coal mining became important, mainly in Carbon County near the towns of Helper and Price. In the early twentieth century copper mining became very important. Later on uranium began to be mined.

When all of the minerals were mined out of an area, a mine was simply abandoned. Abandoned mines are dangerous. Timbers used for wooden supports, ladders, shaft covers can rot. Mine roof, side walls and opening can collapse trapping the unsuspecting explorer or even worse, they could crush you. You can get lost in underground mine workings. Old explosives and blasting caps are extremely unstable. Equipment can roll trapping a person or causing serious cuts, broken bones or death. Bad air, no air or toxic gases may be presence since the mine is no longer ventilated. Natural decay of radioactive minerals can result in a buildup of radon which can cause damage to your lungs and other organs like your eyes. Hazardous waste may have been left at an abandoned mine site. Mine waste dumps can contain toxic elements that can cause cancer. Mines can contain deep pools of water. Water from an abandoned mine can be polluted. You can fall down a shaft. You can drown in water-filled pits or quarries. Unstable slopes can crumble underneath your feet. There are many other hazards that you can’t even see.

In his presentation, Mr. Gallegos will give an overview of the AMRP and talk about its involvement with closing abandoned uranium mines. He will also show a 20-minute video “Mining on the Swell”, which is based on oral history interviews with miners or workers involved with uranium mining in the San Rafael Swell.
Speaker Biography

Mr. Gallegos' current position in the Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program (AMRP) is Senior Reclamation Engineer with duties that include: project management, health and safety, radiation safety, bat survey coordination, and administrative support. He previously worked in the Utah hardrock regulatory program for 10 years reviewing mining and reclamation plans, reclamation bonding and performing compliance inspections. He earned a MS degree and BS degree in Mining Engineering both from the University of Utah. Mr. Gallegos grew up in the small mining town in Carbon County, Utah called Dragerton (now East Carbon City).