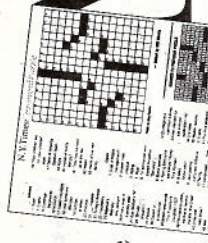


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ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

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Work Starts on Water Disinfectant System

■ *Method will avoid dangerous chlorine*

By **JOHN FLECK**
Journal Staff Writer

Albuquerque water officials on Thursday kicked off construction of a new, state-of-the-art system to disinfect the metro area's treated sewage before it is dumped into the Rio Grande.

The goal, officials said, is to reduce the use of hazardous chlorine, which is now used to kill germs in the water before it is discharged into the river in Albuquerque's South Valley.

Construction on the new \$7.4 million ultraviolet treatment system is expected to take about a year, officials said at a news conference Thursday morning at the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority's waste water treatment

plant.

"The plant is about to become a lot safer," said Art De La Cruz, the Bernalillo County commissioner who represents the neighborhood around the plant.

The plant treats sewage from the city of Albuquerque and surrounding areas.

The chlorine currently in use is an effective technology, officials said, but requires weekly delivery of truckloads of chlorine, which is highly toxic.

The new treatment system will bathe passing wastewater with ultraviolet light, which destroys the genetic material in bacteria and viruses, preventing them from reproducing and therefore eliminating them as a problem, officials said.

By eliminating the need for specialized handling of toxic chlorine, the new system will reduce operating costs in the long run, said Joe Chwirka, who oversees the plant's operations.



PAT VASQUEZ-CUNNINGHAM/JOURNAL

Jeffrey Romanowski, at one of the treatment tanks, manages Albuquerque's sewage treatment plant.