



U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
P.O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

Media Contact:

Tim Runyon
CBFO Communications
(575) 234-7545

www.wipp.energy.gov

 @WIPPNews

WIPP UPDATE: November 3, 2016

Rock Fall Causes Precautionary Evacuation of WIPP Underground

Employees evacuated the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) underground around 2:30 p.m. (MT) today in response to a reported rock fall. There were no injuries and no release of radiological contamination.

Employees working in the area of Panel 7 in the WIPP underground reported a loud noise and observed salt dust indicating a possible rock fall. The employees reported the incident to the Central Monitoring Room (CMR), and the CMR ordered an evacuation of the underground. The WIPP Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated around 3 p.m. as a precautionary measure to monitor the situation.

A team, consisting of mine rescue, geotechnical and radiological control personnel, is developing a plan to re-enter the underground on Nov. 4 to determine the exact location and extent of the rock fall.

No one was hurt, and all employees are safe.

“We have a well-trained workforce that responded appropriately to the event,” said Phil Breidenbach, President and Project Manager for Nuclear Waste Partnership. “We will determine the next steps to take after the re-entry team accesses Panel 7.”