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WIPP UPDATE: July 15, 2016

Status Update on WIPP Restart

Workers at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) are now well into the second month of Cold Operations at the facility and while significant progress has been made, much remains to be accomplished in order to meet the December 2016 projected timeframe for restarting transuranic waste operations. In addition to Cold Ops, Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) and Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP) program managers are focused on a number of activities necessary to ensure the safety of workers at the site including ground control objectives (bolting); completion of readiness and testing activities necessary for the interim ventilation system (IVS) to become operational and repairs and upgrades to fire suppression systems, both on vehicles and in the underground, that will be required for restart.

“We are working to restart in December,” said CBFO Manager Todd Shrader, “but admittedly the schedule is tight. The completion and implementation of the Documented Safety Analysis (DSA) was a critical prerequisite to many of our other restart activities and being the first DSA developed under the new DOE standard DOE-STD-3009-2014, it required us to use a considerable amount of our schedule contingency. That said, it was absolutely necessary as part of our restart activities.”

Late last week Secretary Moniz directed the Carlsbad Field Office to reevaluate the critical path schedule for reopening WIPP and emphasized that safety is paramount.

The second hybrid bolter and an additional mining crew are expected to address outstanding ground control issues and the IVS is now expected to be operational in August. Subcontractors are on site performing tests on existing fire protection systems and installing automatic fire suppression systems on vehicles used in the underground.



Waste Handling and Radiological Control personnel discuss a waste handling procedure during a recent Cold Operations training evolution.

DOE and NWP are working to determine the safest and most efficient path to re-open WIPP as soon as practicable. “We have always said we would only reopen when it was safe to do so” said Shrader. “Our position has not changed.”

Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting - August 4

The City of Carlsbad and DOE co-host Town Hall meetings to provide updates on WIPP recovery and restart activities. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 4 at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. WIPP Town Hall Meetings are live streamed at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>.