



U.S. Department of Energy
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WIPP UPDATE: October 7, 2016

Updates on Ground Control Activities

Additional Rock Falls in Panel 3 Access Drift

This morning, October 7th, Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP) was evaluating the area of the rock fall in the Panel 3 exhaust drift and determined that additional sections have dislodged since the initial report earlier this week. This area was, and continues to be, prohibited which means no personnel are allowed to enter. Being an inactive area of the mine, no ground control measures are being taken and additional falls may occur in this area until the remainder of the unstable portions of the drift have fallen. This additional rock fall in the Panel 3 drift is smaller than the initial fall earlier this week. This prohibited area shows signs that some rock fall will continue until it reaches a stabilized area of the underground that has been identified as a mined out area approximately 10 feet further to the west. As previously reported, this area of the underground does not impact current operations or the resumption of waste emplacement operations. The rock fall area remains in the prohibited portions of the mine.

Panel 7 Room 5 Ground Control Events

Late Monday October 3, during bolting and scaling operations, ground control crews working in Room 5 of Panel 7 identified fracturing when applying tension to roof bolts in areas along the west ribline (intersection of the ceiling and wall) of room 5. Evaluation by geotechnical engineers identified low angle fracturing in the area and miners began using a piece of mining equipment (seal cutter) to safely bring down the section of ceiling. A section of rock approximately 5 feet x 7 feet by 1 foot thick was released during this operation.



Miners operating seal cutters are well away from the location where the rock is being removed.

Access to room 5 has been restricted and a team consisting of miners, geotechnical engineers and radiation control staff are evaluating options for managing the remaining area to ensure worker safety. The actions taken by the miners and geotechnical engineers is typical for ground control and maintenance performed in the WIPP underground when conditions, such as large fractures, warrant this type of action.

Panel 7 Room 5 is within the area contaminated by the February 2014 radiological release. Workers have been milling floors and roof bolting in the area in preparation for the resumption of waste emplacement operations. This is not expected to impact the restart date for waste emplacement operations.

Next Thursday, October 13 the Carlsbad Field Office and Nuclear Waste Partnership will be holding a town hall meeting to discuss recent ground control issues. Mining and geotechnical experts will be on hand to provide information and answer questions regarding recent rock falls that have occurred at the facility. Details on the time and location are below.

Oct. 6 Non-Emergency Evacuation of the WIPP Underground

The Department of Energy identified a deficiency in the WIPP Mine Escape and Evacuation Plan, which still relied on evacuation routes established before some areas had been posted as prohibited. NWP had identified compensatory measures—immediate changes that could be made while the Evacuation Plan is formally updated. During a verification of the implementation of the compensatory measures, representatives of the DOE's Carlsbad Field Office discovered problems with the corrective actions. To ensure worker safety, NWP performed a non-emergency controlled egress of the WIPP underground until the compensatory measures were fully implemented. The compensatory measures ensure each worker knows the egress routes from their work area in the event of an evacuation, based on current underground conditions. The deficiencies were resolved later in the same shift and normal access to the underground has been restored.

Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting – October 13

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, October 13 at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. This meeting will focus on mining and ground control at the WIPP site. WIPP Town Hall Meetings are live streamed at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>.