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Drill Program Ensures Emergency Preparedness

As part of its Corrective Action Plans in response to the Accident Investigation Board reports for the February fire and radiological events, the WIPP Emergency Response Organization (ERO) has undergone extensive change over the past eight months. In addition to adding new personnel, there have been major revisions to procedures and checklists and a robust Drill and Exercise Program was developed to ensure WIPP personnel are prepared to respond to any future emergencies.

The WIPP Drill and Exercise Program is a critical tool for preparing and testing the WIPP workforce, first-responders, Central Monitoring Room staff, Mine Rescue Teams, Emergency Operations Center staff, and member of the Joint Information Center (JIC), as well as functional groups like Radiological Control Technicians. Drills allow hands-on training in a controlled environment to informally test the adequacy of emergency response plans, procedures, equipment, and systems.



Members of the WIPP Joint Information Center practice responding to a mock event during a drill held on November 12.

WIPP's ERO has been conducting drills on a weekly basis since April. On November 12, the site conducted a major drill involving several external organizations and more than three dozen WIPP personnel. The drill scenario included a full activation of the WIPP EOC and the JIC to ensure all participants had the opportunity to demonstrate their training while responding to a simulated underground event. Drill scenarios have included a full evacuation of the WIPP underground facility and responding to radiological incidents and a variety of emergencies on the surface of the facility.

In December, WIPP will conduct a full-scale exercise to demonstrate and evaluate the ability of the Department of Energy and the Carlsbad Field Office site-level Emergency Response Organization to recognize, respond to, contain, and mitigate an operational emergency at the site.

December 4 – The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host its Town Hall meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meeting is scheduled Thursday at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. Live streaming of the meeting can be seen at <http://new.livestream.com/rvv/>.