



U.S. Department of Energy
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WIPP UPDATE: December 1, 2016

Ground Control Progress in Panel 7

Underground operations personnel installed 360 bolts in one recent week – doubling the previous weekly record. The significant progress made in ground control maintenance over the past several weeks in the WIPP underground has exceeded expectations. Ground control is important to ensure safe working conditions for resuming waste emplacement.

“The performance of our underground operations crews has been outstanding,” said Phil Breidenbach, President and Project Manager of Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP). “They are improving ground control in some very difficult conditions, including working in personal protective equipment and respirators.”

Ground control includes the installation of steel bolts, which can range up to 20 feet in length, into the roof and walls of the mine. These bolts support and slow the natural movement that occurs in the underground salt formation where WIPP is located.



An Underground Operations employee, wearing anti-contamination clothing and a respirator, installs bolts in Panel 7 of the WIPP underground.

In addition to ground control efforts in the rooms and associated access drifts of Panel 7, the Carlsbad Field Office and NWP have submitted a request for a Temporary Authorization from the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to move forward with closure activities associated with the withdrawal of the WIPP’s far south end. Deteriorating ground conditions, worker safety issues, the difficulties of rock bolting and ground control in contaminated areas, and the long-term integrity of the

underground led to the decision to close the far south end, allowing for concentrated bolting in Panel 7 and associated drifts.

DOE Operational Readiness Review

The DOE Operational Readiness Review team completed field activities last week and will present their findings by the end of this week. Restart of waste emplacement operations will be determined by the outcome of the team's review and corrective actions defined as prestart findings that must be implemented and validated. NMED will also perform site inspections to ensure WIPP is in full compliance with its hazardous waste facility permit and administrative orders.

Successful completion of all the assessments and reviews, as well as associated corrective actions, will ensure the WIPP people and processes are ready for the safe and compliant resumption of waste emplacement activities.

Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting – December 8

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, December 8, at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. This meeting will be a special Town Hall focused on mining and ground control at the WIPP site. WIPP Town Hall Meetings are live streamed at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>.