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WIPP Authorized to Resume Waste Emplacement

Today the Department of Energy (DOE) authorized Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP) to resume waste emplacement in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. This decision confirms that all pre-start corrective actions identified in the two operational readiness reviews have been completed and properly validated and other required actions were completed.

It is anticipated that the first waste emplacement will be completed in early January 2017 after final ground control preparations are completed.

Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager Todd Shrader said, "Extensive efforts to identify and implement corrective actions have resulted in a facility that is safer today and we look forward to the facility soon resuming its highly critical mission to dispose of the nation's defense transuranic waste."

"Tremendous credit should go to the WIPP workers for what we have accomplished this year", said Phil Breidenbach, President and Project Manager for Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP).

The WIPP workforce, CBFO and NWP, will jointly focus on the completion of some minor ground control (i.e. floor leveling) that is necessary in Panel 7 before initial waste emplacement begins. All start-up activities that are required in order to begin to move the waste currently stored in the Waste Handling Building into the underground have been reviewed and validated. As always, safety takes the top priority and an official date for waste emplacement resumption will be confirmed when the minor ground control work is completed.

Today CBFO has posted to the WIPP Recovery Web Site the following documents, among which are reports prepared by independent reviewers and oversight regulators that conclude that WIPP is in compliance with oversight assessments:

Department of Energy Operational Readiness Review

The [DOE Operational Readiness Review \(DORR\) Team](#) wrapped up its review and provided a briefing on its findings at the [Dec. 15, 2016 Town Hall Meeting](#). The DORR identified 21 pre-start findings that had to be resolved and validated before waste emplacement could resume, and 15 post-start findings that can be addressed concurrently with waste emplacement activities. The findings addressed emergency preparedness, waste acceptance, fire protection, and other functional areas. In addition, the team evaluated the CBFO's capabilities to perform effective oversight.

The DORR team concluded that upon satisfactory closure of the pre-start findings and approval of corrective action plans for the post-start findings, WIPP can safely restart waste emplacement in accordance with DOE standards. The full DORR report is available at http://www.wipp.energy.gov/Special/WIPP_DORR_Final_Report.pdf

Contractor Operational Readiness Review

A Contractor Operational Readiness Review (CORR) was conducted at WIPP between October 3 and October 14, 2016. The CORR encompassed all aspects of the restart of the Contact-Handled (CH) Waste Emplacement operations at WIPP and provided DOE and CBFO with an independent assessment of Nuclear Waste Partnership's (NWP) readiness to commence CH waste emplacement operations.

The report identified seven pre-start findings in the areas of emergency notification, initial response actions, emergency evacuation, personnel training and qualifications, and procedure management. The report also identified five post-start findings in areas related to radiation control and job hazard analysis. The CORR team report concluded that waste emplacement operations could proceed safely, once pre-start findings have been satisfactorily resolved and all prerequisites were completed. The full CORR report is available at http://www.wipp.energy.gov/Special/WIPP_CORR_Final_Report.pdf.

National Environmental Policy Act Supplement Analysis

On December 21, 2016, the Department of Energy finalized a Supplement Analysis (SA) to evaluate the proposed action to resume and continue the transportation of waste to WIPP by truck and the operation of the WIPP for the disposal of TRU waste generated by atomic energy defense activities. Based on the analysis in this SA, DOE's proposed action does not represent substantial changes to either the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement-II [DOE/EIS-00260S2] or 2009 WIPP Supplement Analysis [DOE/EIS-0026-SA-07] that are relevant to environmental concerns, and there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the Proposed Action or its environmental impacts. DOE has therefore determined that no further NEPA documentation is required. The SA can be found at http://www.wipp.energy.gov/Special/Supplemental_Analysis_WIPP_Operations_12_2016.pdf.

Mine Safety and Health Administration – Technical Support Evaluation

On December 1, 2016, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) issued a report documenting its recent Technical Support Evaluation of the ground conditions at WIPP. This evaluation, which took place between October 24 and 31, 2016, was performed at the request of CBFO, NWP and the MSHA South Central District, located in Dallas, Texas.

The team recognized the challenges presented by the limited ventilation in the underground and decrease in productivity for ground control crews working in personal protective equipment and respirators. The team had no adverse findings. The report recommends several actions to avoid future ground falls and to return ground control program to a proactive posture. The full report is available at http://www.wipp.energy.gov/Special/MSHA_Technical_Support_Evaluation.pdf.

WIPP Site Incident Independent Review Team (WSIIR) – New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology

The WIPP Site Incident Independent Review Team (WSIIR) is a team of faculty and scientists from New Mexico Tech, led by Dr. Van Romero, who were assembled at the request of DOE to conduct an independent and transparent review of the radiological release incident at WIPP. The team reviewed and analyzed reports prepared by the DOE Accident Investigation Board, the Technical Assessment Team, Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center. The WSIIR team agreed with the work done by the other investigations and identified

complacency and external pressures as contributing factors in the events. The full report can be found at <http://www.nmt.edu/images/stories/WSIIRFINALReport2016.pdf>.