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## WIPP UPDATES: March 23, 2014

The public has asked a number of questions at recent Town Hall meetings. In an effort to share this information, we have provided some of the questions and corresponding answers. More will follow.

### **March 20, 2014, Carlsbad Town Hall meetings co-hosted by Mayor Dale Janway and DOE**

**Q. 1) Will there be a presentation on the path of wind after the release, such as a wind map to determine the downwind path?**

**2) Provide the public with wind forecasting immediately after the event and the weeks that followed, such as a regional weather report for New Mexico and surrounding states.**

A. 1) Modeling results for the downwind path can be found on the WIPP home page at <http://www.wipp.energy.gov/Special/Modeling%20Results.pdf>.

2) The release of radioactive contamination from WIPP was very small. As the contamination disperses in the air and settles to the ground, concentrations in the air reach background levels in a very short period of time and within a short distance; two kilometers or less.

**Q. Don't you have cameras down there?**

A. We do not have cameras in the underground. This capability is being evaluated for the future operations of WIPP.

**Q. How will waste be stored at WCS?**

A. WCS is a facility licensed and permitted to safely store radioactive waste, and the waste will be stored in accordance with licensing and permitting requirements.

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**Q. What is doffing?**

A. In the WIPP context, “doffing” means removing protective clothing in a deliberate manner. It is important that as our employees exit potentially-contaminated areas, they follow the proper procedure for removing their protective clothing (doffing) to prevent the spread of any contamination they may have picked up during their time in the potentially contaminated area.

**Q. What is transuranic waste?**

A. Uranium is 92 on the periodic table of elements, so “transuranic” refers to elements such as plutonium and americium, which are “above” 92 on the period table. They are manmade isotopes used in many industrial, medical and defense applications. Transuranic wastes disposed underground at WIPP largely consist of protective clothing, tools, rags, and soils primarily contaminated with plutonium during research and fabrication of nuclear weapons.

**Q. What do you plan to do with the waste currently stored on the surface at WIPP?**

A. According to the WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit, waste can be stored in WIPP’s Waste Handling Building for up to 60 days. DOE requested and received approval from the New Mexico Environment Department for a 45-day extension. DOE is considering options for managing the waste until WIPP waste disposal operations resume.

**Q. What was the type of material released from WIPP on Feb 14?**

A. The primary material of concern during the release was transuranic radionuclides -- predominantly americium-241, which is consistent with the waste disposed underground at WIPP. As a comparison, americium is the same radionuclide used in consumer smoke detectors.

### **Community Meetings Scheduled**

**March 25** – WIPP officials will update the Artesia City Council on WIPP recovery activities at 7:00 p.m. Location: 511 W. Texas Ave., Artesia.

**March 25** – WIPP and WCS representatives will present information and answer questions at a town meeting at the Community Center in Eunice, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

**March 27** – Carlsbad Mayor Dale Janway and DOE will co-host a Town Hall meeting Thursday, March 27, featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities.

The town hall meetings are held at 5:30 p.m. every Thursday at the Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. They are also streamed live at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/wipptownhall>.