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WIPP UPDATE: April 29, 2014

Laboratory tests salt decontamination methods

WIPP recently sent clean, non-contaminated salt samples to the Idaho National Laboratory for testing to determine the most effective decontamination methods. Technicians at the lab brushed salt surfaces with a non-toxic fluorescent powder. The consistency of the powder is similar to radioactive particles and is easily observed under a microscope.

For these initial tests, technicians used several methods to remove the powder particles from the salt's surface. The two methods that were most effective were a water wash and a strippable gel coating. The tests showed that salt can be decontaminated, which is important because the WIPP underground facility is located in a salt mine. The lab will conduct additional tests in the coming weeks.

Entries into the underground facility have shown that areas in Panel 7 of the waste disposal area and the exhaust shaft were contaminated during the radiological release that occurred February 14. Re-entry teams are still working to identify the source and cause of contamination.

Community Meetings Scheduled

May 1 – The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host a weekly meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meeting is scheduled on Thursday at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. Live streaming of the weekly meetings can be seen at <http://new.livestream.com/rvy/>.