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WIPP UPDATE: April 9, 2015

Initial Closure of Panel 6 Underway

WIPP personnel have completed the installation of the metal bulkhead at the entrance of Panel 6. This is the first step in meeting a New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) administrative compliance order to provide initial closure of Panel 6, which holds some of the containers from the waste stream linked to the February 14 radiological release in Panel 7, Room 7. Interim closure further isolates the waste and provides additional protection for underground workers. A final closure system will be installed after approval on a final closure plan is approved by NMED.



WIPP workers install rubber flashing around the metal bulkhead recently installed in Panel 6.

With the entrance side of Panel 6 closed, workers are now making their way toward the exhaust side of the panel to perform ground control activities. This includes bolt installation to stabilize the walls and ceilings so that a similar bulkhead can be installed on the exhaust side, completing initial closure. Initial closure activities on Panel 6, which is filled with transuranic waste for final disposal, began prior to radiological event. Workers had already installed a chain link barrier, a layer of brattice cloth and 10 feet of mined salt on the entrance side. Last week, the initial closure of the Panel 6 entrance was completed by erecting the metal bulkhead in the tunnel opening and fitting rubber flashing around the sides to seal off airflow.

Employees performing these activities used the appropriate personal protective equipment for working in the contaminated areas of the underground. The work was performed safely and in accordance with approved plans and procedures.

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When initial closure of Panel 6 is completed, workers will focus their attention on initial closure of Panel 7, Room 7. The initial closure plan for room 7 was approved by NMED last week. Like Panel 6, additional ground control will be necessary before initial closure can be completed.

Franco to Return to Richland Operations Office

Carlsbad Field Office Manager Joe Franco announced this week that he will be leaving his position at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and returning to DOE's Richland Operations Office in Washington State. A Carlsbad native, Franco has been with the WIPP project for 17 years, serving as the CBFO manager since 2012. Franco spent six years as the assistant manager at the Richland Operations Office before returning to Carlsbad as the Field Office Manager. In his return to Richland, Franco will be the Assistant Manager for Mission Support.

Special WIPP Town Hall Meeting Scheduled April 16

The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host a special Town Hall meeting featuring a presentation on the Accident Investigation Report Phase II with members of the Technical Assessment Team available to answer questions. The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 16 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/rrv/>.