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WIPP UPDATE: May 6, 2014

Recovery progress deliberate, safe

WIPP employee re-entries into the underground facility are very complex. While we have gathered much information and research, there are still several possibilities for what caused the February 14 radiological event. As additional information comes in, we must address different scenarios in our entry plans and safety documents.

After each entry, WIPP uses the information learned by the teams to determine the next steps. They also develop a work package that addresses concerns raised during the review process and identifies potential hazards and the necessary controls to ensure that work is performed safely.

Before each entry, we carefully prepare our employees for situations that could occur. Our primary concern is the safety of workers, the public and the environment. Once the work package is approved, re-entry teams perform mock-up training to demonstrate proficiency with the equipment and confirm that each task can be performed safely.

The required personal protective equipment also limits how long the teams can remain in the underground facility. For example, workers on the re-entry teams use battery-powered respirators while in the underground facility, which limit the team's investigation time. During the investigation time, teams must put on all of the appropriate equipment, travel to and return from the area they are investigating, and decontaminate equipment taken into contaminated areas before returning to the surface. This is in addition to work performed in Room 7 of Panel 7 where they are still assessing the cause of the radiological release.

Safety must be the cornerstone for WIPP's employees during the recovery process; shortcuts during this critical time could lead to injury or worse.

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Community Meetings Scheduled

May 8 – 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/>.