



U.S. Department of Energy
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Answers to previous Town Hall questions provided

A number of questions have been asked at recent Town Hall meetings. Below is information that addresses these questions.

Q: Does the public have access to the site to test independently?

A: Due to the nature of the work performed, the general public does not have access to the WIPP site. However, in addition to the on-site and off-site monitoring performed by WIPP, the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center conducts independent sampling and posts the results on its website. Both the state of New Mexico and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have access to the site for sampling and other regulatory functions. EPA recently staged mobile monitoring and performed independent off-site monitoring near WIPP for a three-week period.

Q: How would you deal with repairs to bolts and walls once the areas are filled?

A: Once workers finish filling a room or panel with transuranic waste containers and close it off, we can no longer access these areas. At that point, the salt naturally begins to creep in and encapsulate the waste containers. It is important to remember this has always been the design plan for WIPP.

Q: Is there a manifest of all the contents of the materials stored at WIPP?

A: Yes, this information is collected as part of the waste characterization and certification process.

Q: Does the underground CAM (continuous air monitor) sample air from the mine's ceiling area or at worker breathing height? If the samples are not taken at the ceiling, how much radioactive "smoke" escaped the mine before the alarm?

A: The continuous air monitors (CAMs) in the underground facility pull air samples from about the average worker's height. The CAMs detected no significant radioactivity escaping the mine following the Feb. 5 fire. No significant radioactive material left the underground facility prior to the Feb. 14 radiological release, when the CAMS detected the release, sounded an alarm, and shifted the system from ventilation to filtration.

Q: Does a backup electrical system exist that powers the mine's ventilation system or other systems?

A: WIPP maintains diesel generators that provide backup power for various systems and facilities.

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/rrv/>.