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## **WIPP UPDATE: May 7, 2015**

### **NMED Approves Transuranic Waste Storage Extension**

On May 1, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) approved a request from the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) and Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP) for an extension of storage in the Waste Handling Building at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant until June 30, 2016. Waste placement operations at the WIPP site have been suspended since the February 2014 fire and radiological events. Waste containers that were on the surface at the time of the events have been safely stored in the on-site Waste Handling Building. The WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit limits storage in the Waste Handling Building to a period of 60 days. CBFO and NWP filed requests with NMED following the events and have been granted several short term extensions to temporarily storage these containers.

An evaluation of waste management alternatives determined that keeping the waste containers temporarily stored in the waste handling building is the safest and most secure way to manage this waste is for it to remain at the WIPP facility until it can be permanently disposed in the WIPP underground. Waste containers stored in the Waste Handling Building are inspected daily, while ambient radiation and volatile organic compounds levels are also routinely monitored.

### **Progress Continues Toward Initial Closure of Panel 6**

Work crews continue to make significant progress toward the initial closure of Panel 6 in the WIPP underground. This week crews completed installation of the “substantial barrier” that consists of chain link, brattice cloth, run-of-mine salt and installation of the steel bulkhead. The major physical structures for the initial closure have been installed and what remains are minor support activities necessary to meet the requirements of the approved closure plan.

“The fact that we are this close to completing initial closure of Panel 6 is a real testament to the workforce,” said CBFO Manager Joe Franco. “I applaud the efforts of our workers who had to wear personal protective equipment while reestablishing the habitability and operability of safety equipment and supplies in the underground; performing equipment cleaning and maintenance; and conducting ground control, decontamination and

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preparatory activities necessary for initial closure,” he said.

**Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting Scheduled May 7**

The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host a Town Hall meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 7 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/>.