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WIPP UPDATE: June 22, 2016

Prestart Activities Continue at WIPP

Prestart activities are continuing at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) as employees verify and validate operating procedures in preparation for resuming transuranic waste emplacement operations at WIPP. On June 1 WIPP workers began the phase of prestart activities referred to as Cold Operations. Cold Operations includes verifying adequacy of procedures and equipment operability; and allows operators to regain proficiency with both. These activities are all conducted in a controlled environment using simulated waste containers.



WIPP waste handling personnel review a procedure as part of prestart activities at WIPP.

The daily operations or “evolutions” start with the basic tasks and increase in complexity until the entire procedure or process has been completed. The idea is to implement and practice all procedures and ensure they can be easily understood and accurately followed as written. Waste handling personnel are working through all the procedures, performing pre-operational checks on equipment and have begun practice loading and unloading TRUPACT-II shipping casks. Cold Operations is expected to last through the end of July or until all activities can be performed safely and efficiently.

WIPP Red Team Wins Northern Regional Mine Rescue Competition

The WIPP Red Team (mine rescue) took top honors last week at the Northern Regional Mine Rescue Contest, in Clymer, New York. The WIPP Red team outdueled eight other teams from the region, to win first place overall in the competition. WIPP’s Red team took first place in the first aid competition, first in the trainer competition, first in the technical competition and third in the field competition on their way to the overall

first place win. “We are very proud of both mine rescue teams,” said Phil Breidenbach, NWP President and Project Manager. “These men and women put in countless hours training to perfect their skills so they are ready to respond if needed.”

Federal law requires every operating mine in the United States to have access to two mine rescue teams. Mine rescuers are highly trained specialists with life-saving skills they hope they'll never need to use. In addition to rescue capabilities, WIPP's Blue and Red mine rescue teams support (and are supported by) personnel from area potash mines through Memorandums of Understanding. This ensures that mines in the same region have access to capable, highly trained personnel in the event of an emergency.

Mine rescue competitions are designed to sharpen skills and test the knowledge of team members who would be called on to respond to a mine emergency. The contests require team members to solve hypothetical mine emergency problems (such as fires, explosions or cave-ins) while being timed and observed by judges from the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Both Red and Blue Teams from WIPP will be competing in the upcoming national metal/nonmetal mine competition July 25-28 in Reno, Nevada.

Carswell to Lead National TRU Program

Senior Nuclear Safety Specialist Jeff Carswell was recently appointed as the acting National Transuranic (TRU) Program (NTP) Recovery Manager. “Jeff will be responsible for coordinating all of the activities of the National TRU Program, Quality Assurance, and other Carlsbad Field Office and contractor organizations responsible for ensuring we are able to ship and receive waste once WIPP re-opens”, said Carlsbad Field Office Manager Todd Shrader. “I am pleased that Jeff has accepted this position and look forward to his help in moving the NTP program forward”. Carswell recently completed the WIPP Documented Safety Analysis process that established the safety envelope for all operations at WIPP and outlines Waste Acceptance Criteria.



Jeff Carswell

Tentative Date for Next WIPP Town Hall Meeting - August 4

The City of Carlsbad and DOE co-host Town Hall meetings to provide updates on WIPP recovery and restart activities. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, August 4 at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. WIPP Town Hall Meetings are live streamed at <http://new.livestream.com/rvv/>.