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WIPP UPDATE: August 19, 2014

Underground facility entry requirements modified at WIPP

Entries into the WIPP underground facility are becoming more frequent, a sign that recovery efforts are progressing. Recently, radiological control personnel began conducting the surveys and sampling necessary to reclassify areas in the underground facility from areas of potential airborne contamination to radiological buffer areas. A buffer area is an uncontaminated area immediately adjacent to the contaminated area and is usually located at the exit or entrance point of the contamination zone. The initial areas being surveyed, sampled and reclassified were near the shaft locations where employees enter and exit the underground facility before moving deeper into the mine. Employees can now enter these areas of underground facility without breathing protection (i.e. respirators). However, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is still required when entering contaminated areas.

The underground facility has been separated into “zones” and each zone will be surveyed, sampled and verified before being released for occupancy without PPE. This will allow underground personnel to begin maintenance activities, including cleaning and maintaining equipment located in the underground facility. It will also allow the necessary ground control activities to ensure the underground facility remains safe and secure as work resumes.

Community meetings scheduled

August 21 – The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host its Town Hall meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meeting is scheduled Thursday 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/>.