



U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
P.O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

Media Contact:

Tim Runyon
WIPP Recovery Communications
(575) 234-7545

www.wipp.energy.gov

@WIPPNews

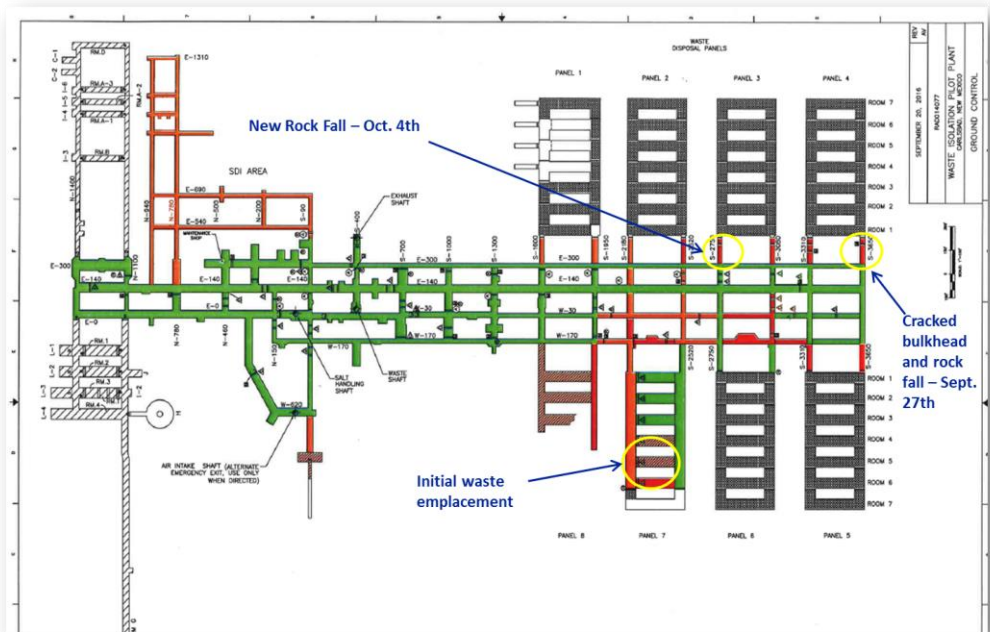
WIPP UPDATE: October 5, 2016

Ground Control Review Identifies Additional Rock Fall

On October 4, during on-going ground control inspections, mining and ground control engineers at WIPP discovered a rock fall had taken place in what was the exhaust access drift to Panel 3. Panel 3 was closed in February 2007, and access to the openings of the panel have been restricted (requiring management approval to access) since November 2014 and prohibited (no personnel entry allowed) since January 2015. No employees were present at the time of the rock fall. This was the second rock fall identified within the last seven days in the south area of the underground, where bolting and ground control has not been performed and where access by workers has been restricted.

Ground control and bulkhead inspections are conducted to meet Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) standards and are required by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Hazardous Waste Facility Permit. Inspections are performed on a weekly basis in order to ensure worker safety; visual observations of access drifts and bulkheads are made from outside of the prohibited areas. The fact that WIPP salt naturally and continuously closes in on open spaces is why it was selected for a waste repository. Rock falls in areas designated as “prohibited areas” do not represent a safety issue or violation of regulatory standards for safety.

Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP) and the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) are working closely with the workforce and their geotechnical experts to continue to identify areas of the underground that may need to be closed because of ground control concerns.



A town hall meeting on ground control is planned for Thursday, October 13, at 5:30 pm at the Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. Subject matter experts from NWP and CBFO will be on hand to provide information and answer questions relative to ground control status at WIPP.