



U.S. Department of Energy  
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Waste Isolation Pilot Plant  
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## **WIPP UPDATE: May 9, 2014**

### **Current Status at WIPP**

As part of the ongoing efforts to identify the cause of the February 14 event at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, we are evaluating all possible causes including the waste packages themselves. All possible scenarios will be thoroughly investigated until the cause of the event has been determined.

Scientists and technical experts from across the DOE complex have been incorporating information collected from the re-entry teams and environmental sample analysis to narrow down the list of potential causes of the release. To date, WIPP has determined that the radiological release was not the result of a partial roof collapse in the mine or a bolt falling from the roof and puncturing a container.

Visual examinations in Room 7 of Panel 7 have shown that several magnesium oxide bags, placed on top of waste containers to prevent radioactive material from being released into the environment over a 10,000-year period, were damaged. WIPP is still working to determine what caused the damage to the magnesium oxide bags.

The WIPP team is evaluating the contents of a set of waste drums that came from Los Alamos National Laboratory that are located in Panel 7, the location of the event. The team is looking at the possibility that a chemical reaction may have occurred within a drum, causing a potential release. As they evaluate this possibility, it is also prudent to temporarily stop shipments of this specific LANL waste stream to the Waste Control Specialists facility in Texas.

Researchers at Los Alamos and Savannah River National Laboratories are also conducting tests to see if the chemical processing of the waste streams in question could potentially have created an unstable chemical environment.

### **When Will WIPP Reopen?**

There are currently too many unknowns to provide a date for receiving waste again. These include the cause of the radiation release, any cleanup activities that may be required and how we can prevent this from happening again. We are committed to implementing corrective actions as recommended by the Accident Investigation Board and will only reopen WIPP when we are certain it can be operated safely.

### **CBFO Manager's Weekly Update to Local Residents**

Read Carlsbad Field Office Manager Joe Franco's letter to Eddy and Lea County residents at [http://www.wipp.energy.gov/pr/2014/5\\_09\\_14\\_CBFO\\_Manager\\_Ltr.pdf](http://www.wipp.energy.gov/pr/2014/5_09_14_CBFO_Manager_Ltr.pdf).

### **Keeping the Communication Lines Open**

There are many ways to access information about the WIPP Recovery Process. Current and past updates can be found on the WIPP website at [www.wipp.energy.gov](http://www.wipp.energy.gov). A weekly WIPP Town Hall meeting is hosted every Thursday by DOE and the Carlsbad Mayor's Office at the City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The meeting can also be viewed live on <http://new.livestream.com/rvv/>.

**Note:** The next WIPP Update will be on Monday, May 12, 2014.