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WIPP UPDATES: Data Show Filtration System Worked

Sampling Data for Ventilation System Posted

Sampling data from the ventilation system at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant shows the filtration system worked as designed during the recent radiation release incident. The data has been posted to the WIPP web site (<http://www.wipp.energy.gov/Special/Ventilation%20System%20Sampling%20Results.pdf>). These samples were analyzed following the detection of airborne radioactivity on February 14, 2014. They are not environmental samples, and they are not representative of the public or worker breathing zone air samples. They do provide assurance, however, that the high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter system, which is designed to capture radioactive contamination before it gets to the environment, worked as designed. The WIPP ventilation system proved more than 99 percent effective in capturing radioactive constituents during the recent release event.

The sample results are consistent with results reported by the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center (<http://www.cemrc.org/>). The reported results in this new data are preliminary field estimates and not broken down to identify specific radioactive isotopes, like plutonium and americium. This data represents measurements taken before decay of naturally occurring radioactivity, which requires several days, so they may over-state the amount of radioactivity present.

Entire WIPP Workforce Needed for Recovery

All of the current workforce at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant will be needed during recovery efforts from two recent incidents, the U.S. Department of Energy agreed today. Nuclear Waste Partnerships (NWP) recently submitted a workforce utilization strategy and DOE agreed that all NWP employees will be vital to recovery activities at the nation's only deep geologic waste repository.

NWP employees will be involved in investigating the cause of the radiation release and implementing the appropriate corrective actions. They will be involved in corrective actions implemented following the completion of the investigations into both the underground fire and the radiation release. There also will

be considerable retraining that will have to take place, both in response to the changed conditions within the repository, and to changes in processes and procedures that may be implemented as part of corrective action plans.

Next Town Hall Meeting Scheduled

Carlsbad Mayor Dale Janway and DOE will be co-hosts of weekly town hall meetings to update the community on recovery activities at WIPP. The meetings will be held every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. at the Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. Plans are underway to make the town hall meetings available via webcast for those can't attend in person. We will share a web link when it becomes available. The next meeting will be Thursday, March 13, and will feature an update on recovery activities.