

Update 3/15/04 | Shipments expected for the week of 03/14/04 through 3/20/04: INEEL (4), Hanford (2), RFETS (11), SI

TRU TeamWorks

A weekly e-newsletter for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant team

March 15, 2004



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Feedback

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WIPP Shipments
(as of 03/15/04
at 8:59 a.m.)

Shipments scheduled to arrive at WIPP 3/14/04 - 3/20/04 23
Total shipments received at WIPP 2,405
Total volume disposed at WIPP 18,600 m ³
FY04 Performance Metrics

The Big Story

WTS is again a VPP "Super Star"



WTS employees have once again earned the "Super Star" award in the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Participants Association (VPPPA) "Star Among Stars" program. The VPPPA is a member association of companies that participate in either the DOE VPP or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration VPP.

WTS first received the "Super Star Among Stars" award in 2002 and has now repeated the feat for 2003. The Super Star is presented to facilities that achieve injury rates which are 75 percent below the industry's nationwide averages. This is the third consecutive year that WTS has won an award in the VPPPA program, with the first being a "Star Among Stars" award in 2001 for keeping rates at least 50 percent below the industry averages.

The injury rates used to determine eligibility for the Super Star are calculated using the number of hours worked, the number of recordable injuries and the number of injuries that were serious enough to require restricted work activities or days away from work. In 2003, WTS recorded ten recordable injuries with no injuries that required days away from work. This record established WTS' injury rates at 79 percent below the industry averages.

WTS adds the VPPPA "Super Star Among Stars" award to the recently-received Washington Group International "Presidents Award" for achieving more than a million hours worked without an injury causing days away from work, along with the DOE's VPP "Superior Star" for maintaining injury rates that are more than 50 percent below the industry average.

The 2003 Super Star Among Stars award was announced at the annual Region VI VPPPA conference. Region VI consists of New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. This year's conference was recently held in Oklahoma City.

-- submitted by *Curtis C. Wynne, CSP, VPP Coordinator*

In the news



Ready for 'more



Right on schedule



TLD 411



Safe priorities



Spam scams!

The Livermore challenge



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The Central Characterization Project team deployed at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in Livermore, California, has its work cut out for it, but the team is up to challenge. The team is set to begin operations in April at full throttle, with plans to characterize more drums on the first day at LLNL than previous startup operations at other sites.

The CCP team was deployed to LLNL in November to set up its operation. It has since worked nonstop incorporating site-specific safety requirements into its operational procedures. Tim Hedahl, WTS National TRU Programs manager explains, "LLNL is a unique site with a small buffer zone between its nuclear operations and the surrounding community. DOE sites such as Hanford and NTS were chosen for their remoteness, but the Livermore lab is located next to a major thoroughfare. This necessitates more comprehensive safety reviews of our characterization processes. The CCP team, led by Bob Billett, LLNL project manager, has worked closely with the LLNL staff to ensure that all safety concerns are resolved."

Once operations begin in April, the CCP team will have just a couple of months to characterize a legacy waste inventory of 500 drums – with a stretch goal of 800 drums. This is a considerable challenge, but the team is ready, says Billett. "We need to rapidly begin characterizing waste at our production capacity and maintain that rate for the entire duration. Of course, all work must be performed safely and in compliance with our procedures."

"The high level of output expected at LLNL is possible because of the experience we have gained over the past three years at other facilities," notes Joe Franco, CCP project manager. "Each site where we operate brings its own learning experiences. By making use of these lessons learned, we are able to improve our efficiency at the next site."

Cooperation and teamwork play vital roles. "The LLNL Characterization Project has been through a rigorous and demanding Operational Readiness Review process (ORR), a first for CCP," continues Billett. "The ORR process was quite an experience for all of us, and I am extremely proud of our performance and the manner in which the CCP personnel at LLNL, in Carlsbad, and the LLNL Legacy Waste Project interacted and responded to the ORR teams. We are well on our way to closing the pre-start findings identified during the review and starting characterization of the waste at LLNL."

The CCP LLNL team will complete characterization operations by the end of May. Shipments from that site to WIPP will not start until late August, pending certification approval.



An aerial view of the Lawrence Livermore facility.

CCP LLNL Project Team Members

Bob Billett
James Behanna
Tom Donohue
Beverley Medlin
Harvey Padilla
Abraham Romo
Favian Romo
L. J. Walker
Mike Williams

According to schedule



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The challenging job of ensuring that shipping remains on track goes to Angela Johnson. Johnson, WTS Transportation Operations manager, is responsible for coordinating generator site shipments to WIPP.

Since 1999, the number of WIPP shipments has increased from two per week to more than 20. To support the 10-fold increase in shipment rates, numerous TRUPACT-II shipping containers and trailers have been added to the fleet. Part of Johnson's job is to ensure that the 66 trailers and 81 TRUPACT-IIs receive scheduled maintenance—without impacting shipping schedules.

Each trailer undergoes 30-day, 90-day and an annual maintenance inspection. TRUPACT-IIs are taken out of service once a year for maintenance.



Shipping schedules are determined from a baseline report generated by DOE. The report specifies how many shipments will be received on a monthly basis and from which generator site.

It's the job of shipping coordination to make it all happen. On any given week, as many as 57 TRUPACT-IIs and 19 trailers could be on the road, and each must be back in time to meet scheduled maintenance.

The TRUPACT-II and HalfPACT fleets stand ready for duty.

The longest trip from a generator site is two days (Hanford) in good weather. According to Johnson, "As a rule of thumb, I allow a four-day buffer for a shipment to return, regardless of the site." By doing this, it helps to ensure that a TRUPACT-II or trailer will always be home in time to meet the maintenance schedule.

ALARA at work



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WIPP employees must take and pass the annual General Employee Training exam to maintain facility access. Because the project's mission is tied to radioactive waste disposal, all personnel must learn the meaning of controlled areas, radiological barriers and postings and have a basic understanding of radiation. Acceptable annual radiation exposure limits for employees is also an important part of the exam.

Each of us is exposed daily to radiation from both natural sources, such as cosmic rays from sun and radon and from manufactured sources (e.g., televisions and medical X-rays). Individual natural background dose is estimated to be 300 millirems per year. A millirem (mrem) is one one-thousandth of a rem - a measurement ascribed to biological damage from radiation.

WIPP guidelines set the administrative dose limit for individuals at 1 rem (1000 mrem) per year – five times lower than the already conservative allowable regulatory limits.

To ensure that workers at WIPP do not exceed the administrative dose limit, radiation exposure is maintained to as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA) levels. WIPP's ALARA committee is responsible for incorporating ALARA concepts into facility design modifications and conduct of operations to minimize worker exposure. Another means of controlling exposure is to control access to radiological areas.

Thermoluminescent dosimeters (TLD) – small dose-measuring devices that can be attached to outer clothing – are issued to anyone likely to exceed a radiation dose of more than 100 mrem per year.

So, what are the actual doses for WIPP employees? The average dose rate for all employees monitored in 2003, including radiological control technicians, waste handlers, truck drivers and others was under two mrem. Of the 647 individuals monitored, 76 received a measurable dose - all far below administrative limits.



TLD requirements are posted at access points into radiological areas.



It should be noted that the TLD measures external or skin dose rates; internal doses are determined from the analysis of fixed air samplers, continuous air monitors and bioassay samples. No worker at WIPP has ever received a measurable internal dose.

"WIPP's low doses are due in part to the small doses from the waste containers, but the ALARA principles used at the facility further reduce the workers' doses," said Marsha Beekman, WTS senior radiological engineer.

Left - an employee dosimeter.

Safety News

Safety, quality compliance, schedules and budgets *A message from Steve Warren, WTS General Manager*

You may have noticed that safety, quality compliance, schedules and budgets at environmental cleanup facilities and at NASA have been in the news a lot lately.

Investigations and root cause analyses of some operational incidents suggest that budgets and schedules received priority over safety and quality compliance. For example, a recent report on the Columbia space shuttle tragedy indicates that the desire to meet schedules probably contributed to the accident. While schedules and cost efficiency are obviously important here at WIPP, let me make it clear that they *never* take precedence over safety and quality compliance.



Safety and quality compliance are THE top priorities at WIPP. Each of you has not only the right, but also *the obligation* to report potentially unsafe or non-compliant conditions. If you are uncomfortable discussing your concern with your manager, I encourage you to use the open-door policy and contact me or your organization's executive manager directly. I assure you that your concerns will be thoroughly investigated and your efforts appreciated.

Thank you for the tremendous job you do each day in making our facility safe, compliant, productive and cost efficient. Please continue to make safety and quality compliance your top priorities!



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Dr. DeVito diagnoses cyber-scams

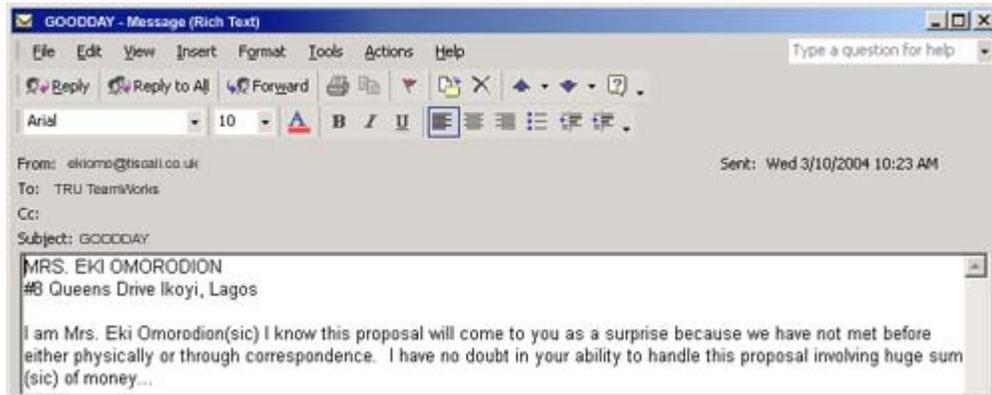


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Above is just one example of spam and e-mail scams that can slip into our mailboxes, but we don't have to fall prey to them. Dr. DeVito (aka Paul DeVito, WIPP Information Systems Site Security Manager (ISSM)) returns to Working Smart with tips to avoid cyber-spam and scams.

- Never reply to a spam message. Resist the temptation to request removal of your name from their list "or to apply for the million dollars," cautions DeVito. "Replying to spam messages only confirms that they have a live address to send further spam."

This recent message is a scam that originates from a fraudulent "visa" credit cardholder protection Web site: *"We were informed that your credit card is (sic) used by another person or stolen ... it is strongly recommended to proceed filling in the secure form on our site and applying for our Zero Liability program."* Victims are asked for their card number and type, ATM code or pin number, and card expiration date. Incorrect grammar is often a clue to these scams.

- Don't fall victim to online credit card or identity theft. Financial advisors recommend never giving out credit card numbers or other personal data unless you initiate the transaction.

The General Services Administration (GSA) cautions federal and contractor credit card managers and cardholders about a scam directed at vehicle fleet programs. GSA requests that attempts of fraud be reported immediately to Faye Zimmerman at 202-586-4887 and to the card issuer.

Government travel cardholders have been targeted, GSA reports. Don't give out account information to an e-mail or caller's request claiming falsely to be from Visa or a bank that requires cardholders to "reactivate" accounts due to a "technical security update." Those institutions never contact cardholders to request card information.



"Dr." DeVito

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Appointments

Mr. **Tim G. Hedahl** is appointed National TRU Program (NTP) manager effective immediately. Tim holds a B.S. degree from Washington State University and an M.B.A. from Idaho State University. He has over 26 years of environmental and waste management experience at DOE facilities, with past management assignments in TRU waste management, environmental restoration, facility decommissioning and demolition, environmental monitoring and protection, pollution prevention, laboratory operations and technology development.



Ms. **Angela Johnson** is appointed Transportation Operations manager. In this position she is responsible for managing TRU waste shipments from the generator sites to WIPP, including shipment scheduling and TRUPACT-II and other Type B container maintenance. She will provide daily integration with Operations and the generator sites to ensure transportation is managed effectively. Ms. Johnson holds a bachelors degree in Business Administration from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. She has 18 years of experience with hazardous material transport via truck and rail.



Sheriff's deputies seek help of WIPP employees

Due to construction on the U.S. Refinery Road (Dead Cow road), the Eddy County Sheriff's Department is asking WIPP employees who use the route to go to and from work to exercise caution. The Sheriff's Department will be monitoring traffic near the construction zone during peak morning and afternoon travel times.

Deputies say they will enforce the zones as "double fine" areas until construction is complete. They ask WIPP employees to assist them in keeping the road safe.

Both CBFO and WTS management recommend employees use U.S. 62-180 instead.

Please be safe.