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By the Numbers

Shipments scheduled to arrive at WIPP for the week of 4/4/04 - 4/10/04: **18**

Total shipments received at WIPP: **2,456**

Total volume disposed at WIPP: **19,042 m³**

FY04 Performance Metrics

New Format

Our new hyperlinked PDF format makes *TRU Team Works* easy to read and easy to print out and keep!



WIPP marks five-year anniversary

For those who endured the early morning cold of March 26, 1999, to witness WIPP's first shipment, it may seem like yesterday. Yet Friday marked five years of WIPP operations. Relative newcomer to WIPP – but not to the waste management industry - CBFO Deputy Manager Lloyd Piper observed, “The transformation from a facility in “standby” mode to operational mode has been nothing short of amazing.”

Looking back, Piper is right. Elation over the first waste shipment was quickly replaced by hard economics: more drums needed to be characterized and shipping schedules needed leveling. Meanwhile, generator sites adjusted to changes in priority and funding. What a challenge!

Dr. Inés Triay, appointed CBFO manager shortly after first waste receipt, saw the immediate need for a systematic TRU waste infrastructure and program, envisioning the likes of Henry Ford's revolutionary assembly line. Standardized characterization processes and procedures could streamline a system of diverse generator sites with varying capabilities to characterize, load and ship waste to WIPP. DOE's goal: “fill the pipeline” with a continuous flow of TRU waste to WIPP.

Working together, WIPP partners, WTS, SNL-CPG, LANL-CB and CTAC, made the National TRU Waste Program (NTP) a true national program, bringing uniformity to TRU waste cleanup. NTP soon fielded the Central

Characterization Project along with mobile characterization and loading units to augment waste characterization and shipping activities at smaller TRU sites that lacked the infrastructure or specialized personnel to characterize, load and ship waste.

DOE also began to identify and schedule available waste streams for shipment. And thus began WIPP's transition to full-scale operations.

With safety the top priority, WIPP has made great progress in five years. Following are some highlights:

- ◆ Disposed more than 19,000 cubic meters of TRU waste
- ◆ Establishment of NTP and CCP mobile capabilities
- ◆ Safety achievements: continued VPP star status, NM Mine Inspector's Award, ISO 14001
- ◆ Removal of 3,100 cubic meters of TRU from Idaho to meet state and federal agreement
- ◆ Corridor openings for RFETS, Hanford, SRS, Argonne-E and NTS
- ◆ Closure of Panel 1
- ◆ Compliance recertification package sent to EPA
- ◆ EPA approval of RH-TRU characterization plans

“Every day for five years,” said R. Paul Detwiler, acting manager of the CBFO, “WIPP employees have demonstrated to the nation and the world that radioactive wastes can be transported and disposed of in a manner that is safe and that protects people and the environment.”



The next step

March 26, 2004, marked the five-year operational anniversary of WIPP. It is fitting that a major step advancing the RH-TRU program also took place on the same day, when EPA announced its approval of the RH-TRU Waste Characterization Program Implementation Plan and the RH Waste Characterization Plan for WIPP.

Though the decision does not authorize any site to begin RH-TRU waste characterization or shipment, it does mark a significant step forward for the RH-TRU program and does allow DOE to proceed in developing site-specific characterization plans for 13 generator facilities that currently store RH waste.

The next steps toward a fully operational RH-TRU program are as follows:

- EPA must approve generator site-specific characterization/quality assurance plans and procedures prior to their implementation, and sites must pass a certification audit.
- In addition to EPA, NMED must approve DOE plans to characterize the hazardous components in RH-TRU wastes, such as solvents and lead. DOE submitted its request for NMED approval in June 2002, more than 21 months ago. According to Wille Most, WRES principal scientist, “NMED responded to the RH-TRU waste permit modification request and deemed it administratively complete. But the state is still

looking at the technical and regulatory justifications for the basis of the request.”

“NMED responded to the submittal with a request for more information,



RH72-B shipping casks will be used to transport RH-TRU waste to WIPP.

called a Notice of Deficiency (NOD),” Most continued, “We responded to the NOD in May 2003. We are now awaiting receipt of a second NOD to address any additional NMED concerns.”

- An operational readiness review (ORR) of the RH-TRU waste handling process at WIPP is the third step that must take place before RH-TRU waste receipt. The ORR will ensure that the WIPP program is fully functional and ready to dispose of this waste type.

“With the EPA approval, the RH-TRU waste program has made significant progress,” notes Most. “We look to continue moving forward toward an opening date in 2006.”

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DOE to award NDA/NDE contracts

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DOE plans to award four contracts to companies for the research and development of one non-destructive assay (NDA) and one non-destructive examination (NDE) unit. Savannah River Site was assigned to lead the bid process by EM-50.

The process began in late 2003 when DOE called for bids regarding the research and development of NDA/NDE technologies for characterizing large TRU waste containers. Some waste containers are too large for existing NDA/NDE equipment and would require wastes to be repackaged into smaller containers for characterization prior to shipment to WIPP. The development of the new NDA/NDE equipment will allow generator sites to characterize large containers, thus eliminating the need to repackage and the risk of potential exposure to workers who would repackage such containers. "While NDA/NDE technology is not new, these bidders face a difficult challenge in developing equipment that will meet WIPP waste acceptance criteria standards," noted Roger Nelson, chief scientist for CBFO.



The bid process, which consists of three phases, is entering Phase I. During Phase I, four bidders, two for each process, will conduct the initial research and technology development of the new NDA/NDE units. This phase requires bidders to develop a technical approach, schedule and cost estimates for a full-scale system. Phase I is

expected to take approximately four to six months. Upon completion of Phase I, one bidder for each unit will be chosen to move into the Phase II process.

Full-scale equipment development will take place in Phase II. Because these units can cost several million dollars, only two bidders will be selected to proceed. The two will be required to actually build and operate respective units, as well as demonstrate that the equipment will meet the WIPP WAC and WAP.

Finally, in Phase III the operating equipment will be audited at the Savannah River site to validate its effectiveness in characterizing large waste containers. Upon successful completion of the Phase III and certification for use at SRS, additional units may be developed at other sites using identical processes and procedures.

**Note for additional information on NDA/NDE see the September 18, 2003 edition of TRU TeamWorks*

Site	Volume m ³
Hanford	7,566
INEEL	19,464
LANL	7,115
LLNL	155
Mound	71
NTS	270
ORNL	203
RFETS	123
SRS	5,016
Total	39,983

Volumes currently packaged in large waste containers around the DOE complex.

The team behind the scenes

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CRA Fast Facts:

- Approximately 75 people were involved in compiling, authoring and reviewing the CRA
- The CRA team resolved over 10,000 comments
- Team members worked through the Thanksgiving holiday (except Thanksgiving day) to meet the submittal deadline
- 700 copies of references cited in the CRA were collected by WRES. One set of references is maintained in the WIPP library

A recent news release notified the nation that DOE had submitted its compliance recertification application (CRA) to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The news release outlines the importance of the CRA to WIPP operations and quotes R. Paul

Detwiler, CBFO acting manager, "The information provided to EPA in this application demonstrates that WIPP continues to comply with EPA's regulations for disposal of TRU waste."

But the work that went into the compilation of data for the CRA is a story in itself. Consider this: the CRA consists of more than 9,000 pages and encompasses all potential scenarios that could affect repository performance. Input was required on site characterization, repository design, facility layout and description, long-term performance, waste inventory estimates, waste characterization techniques and a range of monitoring data. A daunting task to some, but not to the dedicated members of the CRA project team.

Work began on the CRA over two years ago. "Completion of the document required extraordinary teamwork that cut across organizational lines," notes Paul Shoemaker, SNL-CPG manager. "All WIPP participant organizations are represented in the effort, including WTS, LANL-CB, CTAC, WRES, SNL-CPG and other subcontract organizations." Even project initiation and leadership has been a study in collaboration. Russ Patterson, DOE/CBFO provided federal oversight; Paul

Shoemaker, SNL-CPG and Steve Kouba, WRES, managed the effort; and Steve Casey, now DOE/CBFO, gave birth to the project.

Dateline: WIPP

For Immediate Release: DOE Submits WIPP Compliance Recertification Application to EPA

Team members met regularly to assess progress and coordinate schedules. "Unsurpassed

planning and organization made this project a success," continues Steve Kouba, WRES manager of EPA Compliance Programs. "Our timeline called for completion of the project ahead of schedule. This allowed us to accommodate the many unexpected changes that arose."

In early summer, 2003, the DOE received EPA's agreement to review a change notice to accept Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project waste. This created a new priority for the team to juggle with the completion of the CRA. "The team was up to the task," says Kouba. "The schedule was adjusted and lots of folks worked lots of overtime to ensure that milestones were met."

Timely submittal of the CRA was a crowning achievement for the CRA Project team, but the work is far from over. Data collection for the next CRA continues. EPA must now arrive at a determination that the CRA is complete. The project team will almost certainly be called upon to supply additional information to EPA during the completeness determination process. "The team is taking a brief breather," concludes Shoemaker. "But we're far from finished."

WIPP – A walk on the wild side

Snakes, spiders, wasps and mice. It may sound like an upcoming episode of reality TV, but actually the critters are a little closer to home than that ... and they're bringing their friends.

Crews recently removed vegetation from an area near the main parking lot for the new, lined evaporation pond. As a result, quite a few animals and insects were displaced, and many of them have found their way to the man-made environs of the WIPP site.

"While many of them are harmless," says WTS Land Use Coordinator Doug Lynn, "employees need to exercise caution and good judgment when coming into contact with area wildlife."

In addition to the animals living in the area, dozens of migrant birds that would have normally nested in the shrubs may also seek refuge at the site. All native migrant birds are protected, meaning that it is illegal to harm them, their nests or their young. "It is our responsibility to make a diligent effort to inspect all fire alarms, ladders, doorjamb, alcoves, equipment and other areas where the birds might nest," adds Lynn.

Of particular concern are rabbits. Cute and cuddly as they are, they do pose



some health risks to people. Feeding the floppy-eared rabbits has further encouraged the rabbits to move on-site. Our new neighbors seem to enjoy nibbling on the ornamental trees and shrubs around the cafeteria. Also of concern is the exposure to bacteria resulting from the rabbits' waste. And, as the weather warms, the possibility of rabbits transmitting fleas to people (scratch, scratch) increases.

So what's the right thing to do if you notice nesting activities or encounter wildlife on-site? Call Land Management at Extension 8739. They've got the know-how to make sure that people and critters can safely co-

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Appropriate use of government resources for WTS employees

Effective immediately, WTS has adopted the new CBFO policy on the use of government resources. Employees should review this policy carefully, as it contains numerous new elements that affect personal usage of government resources. Questions about the limited personal use policy may be directed to Bill Keeley at Extension 7594 or Paul DeVito at Extension 7368.

[Policy](#)

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Career Expo

The Counseling & Student Development Center at New Mexico State University - Carlsbad, in partnership with the Carlsbad Rotary Club, will host Career Expo 2004 on Thursday, April 8, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at New Mexico State University-Carlsbad.

The Career Expo provides students an opportunity to:

- Obtain information about career options
- Investigate potential internships or career-related experience opportunities
- Discuss current and/or future employment opportunities

Local employers and agencies will be present to share information about their company or agency by setting up exhibit booths.

For more information call the Counseling & Student Development Center at (505) 234-9337.

Birthdays

Dorothy Thomas (NCI) - April 2

Tricia Rose (L&M) - April 5

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Blood Drive Reminder

The next blood drive will be held at the Skeen-Whitlock Building on April 6 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and at the site on April 7 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Remember to drink plenty of liquids and eat a good meal before donating. Call Mary Williams at Extension 8997 to sign up for an appointment.