

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

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By the Numbers

Transportation and disposal statistics are now available on pages 3 and 4.

Characterization and Repackaging Modular Units (CRMUs) head to SRS

DOE's Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina will receive CRMU components from Carlsbad this week, thanks to the dedication of an integrated project team. The delivery will complete a CBFO commitment to DOE-SRS to provide additional TRU waste visual examination and remediation capability. The units were designed by LANL, constructed and tested in Carlsbad, and will arrive at SRS ready for installation.



The CRMUs left Carlsbad bound for SRS on August 16. Watch a [video clip](#) of the CRMU shipment.

Successful completion of the units for SRS is a triumph for DOE and local communities. Chuck Conway, WTS manager of External Programs, explains, "This project is a testament to the expertise available in Carlsbad and Hobbs. Our team took everything these cities had to offer and made this project happen."

The integrated project team combined skills from several organizations, including WTS, Washington Group International, LANL/CB, EPD, Budwine Service Electric, Constructors Inc., and Westinghouse Savannah River Company. The team received critical oversight from both CBFO and DOE-SRS. "These team members were dedicated and determined to succeed," continues Conway. "They never gave up on the project, even when things got really challenging."

Now that the units are en route to SRS, team members will be busy closing out remaining data packages before returning to their regular duties.

However, team members may be called back into action if DOE decides to continue the project. Two transportainers (see related article in the November 13, 2003 issue of TRU TeamWorks) and a glovebox unit remain in Carlsbad. These could be combined to create a visual examination and remediation assembly that could be put into use at LANL.



CCP Data Center: An information powerhouse

Imagine your job is to review all information necessary to determine if a waste container is eligible for WIPP disposal. Determination will be based on a variety of sources, some paper, some electronic, that must be cross-referenced and analyzed. Data is generated from three or four characterization processes and each data set is reviewed at seven different levels. That's 21 to 28 data reviews for every container of waste. Now multiply that by thousands of waste containers. That's the job of the Central Characterization Project (CCP) at sites where it characterizes TRU waste for shipment to WIPP.

Enter the CCP's Data Center and Tracking System. The Data Center provides a centralized database for users at multiple locations to access, review and report on characterization data – a virtual clearinghouse for TRU waste characterization information. The Center replaces cumbersome manual data collection processes.

Prior to creation of the electronic database, reviewers were obliged to analyze data from paper and a variety of database sources. As shipping rates increased, so did waste data generated by shipping sites. Integrated information technology was needed to support the mission and commitments of the Carlsbad-based CCP.

To facilitate accurate review of waste characterization data, the Center:

- Compiles information from many different sources to allow comprehensive assessment of waste compliance to disposal requirements. Information includes acceptable knowledge reports, characterization batch data reports, maintenance and testing equipment information, operator training status, lessons learned, procedures, nonconformance reports and corrective action reports.
- Flags containers for further evaluation by site project managers (SPM).
- Allows waste certification officials to create shippable container lots from different batches, increasing efficiency and throughput
- Establishes 11 checkpoints for data accuracy. No data manipulation occurs in this database. Data acceptability and waste certification occur outside the database.
- Reports total number of containers eligible for disposal at WIPP, enabling SPMs to track approval efficiency.
- Is easily accessible using an internet browser.

To Dean Mooney, WTS site project quality assurance officer, data integrity is paramount. “We work proactively to maintain the highest possible standards of data integrity.” Mooney developed the requirements for nonconformance report interfaces, data validation rules and business process requirements. Kim Ingram, WTS administrative specialist, structured the database. Both test, validate and look for system efficiencies on a daily basis. “We are a good team,” Mooney says. “Kim has an inherent ability to understand business process requirements and translate those requirements into programming results that meet or, in many cases, exceed business requirements”.

“Seven data reviews are conducted within the system,” notes Ingram. “Five are done at the data generation level and two are completed at the project level. After that, containers are reviewed and certified for disposal then entered into the WIPP Waste Information System for further review. Finally, the E-TRAMPAC system is used to configure shipment payloads in accordance with transportation requirements.”

The Data Center has been online for over two years. Mooney and Ingram are now working on a reporting system to further increase productivity.

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NTS to resume shipments

On January 7, 2004 the Nevada Test Site (NTS) transported its first shipment of TRU waste to WIPP. The shipment was safe and uneventful, but received broad interest by the media and public – a first shipment to pass through Albuquerque on I-40 en route to WIPP.

The first shipping campaign from NTS involved seven shipments of 294 waste drums. After a six-month hiatus, NTS shipments will be back on the road.



WIPP shipments follow predetermined routes.

The next shipment from NTS is scheduled to depart later this month. The 1,177 mile trip will take approximately 27 hours, arriving at WIPP the following day. NTS plans 31 more shipments by year's end, bringing the total to 38 shipments.

Another facility expected to begin shipments in October is Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). Located in Livermore, Calif., LLNL plans to complete 20 TRU waste shipments this calendar year. These will be the first direct shipments from a California facility to WIPP. While some sites in California have made intersite shipments between TRU waste storage facilities, the shipments did not come to WIPP. Like shipments to WIPP, intersite shipments follow a predetermined route.

LLNL shipments to WIPP will travel out of California, pass through Arizona and into New Mexico. In New Mexico, the shipments turn off from Interstate 40 at the U.S. 285 junction and continue down to Carlsbad.

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By the Numbers

Shipments scheduled to arrive at WIPP week of 08/22/04 - 08/28/04: **23**

Hanford - **3**
 NTS - **1**
 RFETS - **15**
 SRS - **4**

(subject to change)

2,891 total shipments received at WIPP as of 08/18/04

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By the Numbers

Waste disposed in the WIPP underground as of 08/19/04:

- 54,202** waste drums
- 3,456** standard waste boxes
- 1,143** ten-drum overpacks
- **23,023** cubic meters

Journey from the center of the earth - or just a half-mile underground

Unlike Jules Vernes' subterranean voyagers launched to the earth's surface by volcano in the 1871 epic *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, WIPP has more practical plans for bringing workers to the surface in the event of a hoist or power failure.

Mine Safety and Health Administration regulations require that two separate exits are available while personnel work in the underground. WIPP has three equipped shafts, which are regularly inspected, maintained, and operated. In the unlikely event of a failure affecting one or more shafts, WIPP has a number of options for bringing workers up from the half-mile-deep repository.

Bob Kirby, underground mine manager, points out that the plant has two power feeds from separate grid areas, making loss of power unlikely. Nevertheless, WIPP maintains two back-up diesel generators capable of powering the air intake shaft hoist. "Should a power outage occur, work would stop in the underground, crews would assemble near the air intake shaft and we would bring them in groups safely to the surface," says Kirby.

The waste and salt shafts are normally used as the primary and secondary exits, but if either is unavailable, the air intake shaft hoist is manned and the air intake shaft becomes the second required exit. This allows personnel to remain safely in the underground and continue work. If any two shafts became unusable, personnel would be immediately withdrawn from the underground.

There are additional safeguards, such as a motor generator set on the salt hoist, and procedures for dealing with a variety of possible, but very unlikely, operational conditions.

For example, the waste hoist can be operated with only control power in an emergency. The waste hoist counterweight is heavier than the conveyance so that if the hoist were to lose power, and have to be used to evacuate underground personnel, the controls can be configured to allow the counterweight to slowly raise the conveyance to the surface.

Lowering it back down the shaft to retrieve personnel can be performed using a 13-ton forklift to make the conveyance heavier than the counterweight. The conveyance, capable of carrying 75 people, is then slowly lowered to the station where the forklift is driven off. Personnel then board for a repeat of the slow, counterweight-driven ride to the surface.

WIPP also has hoist contingency plans for weather-related conditions. Kirby adds, "We have the means to deal with a wide variety of unlikely situations involving our shafts and hoists."



WIPP's Salt-Handling Shaft

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2 Million



Safe Work Hours

Without a Day-Away-From-Work Accident or Injury

WTS achieves 2 million safe work hours

What a difference 2 million hours make. Especially when those hours are safe hours worked at WIPP. WTS surpassed the 2-million-safe-hour mark on August 9, and hopes that number continues to climb.

“Congratulations go to our employees who work safely every day, on every job,” says WTS General Manager Steve Warren. “I am extremely proud of their performance. Safety, not schedules, always comes first at WIPP.”

In those 2 million hours, a lot of work has been completed at WIPP:

- The number of shipments received has more than doubled
- Panel 1 was filled
- Disposal began in Panel 2
- Mining of Panel 3 was completed

In addition, the WTS recordable injury rate has reached its lowest point in company history: 0.61. This compares to a rate of 7.3 for industry. The measure, based on Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards, takes into account the number of injuries and the total number of hours worked.

Another safety milestone will be reached in October, when WTS celebrates WIPP’s 10-year anniversary as a “Star” site in the DOE’s Voluntary Protection Program. WIPP will be the first DOE site to achieve that milestone.

The last time WTS reached the 2-million-safe-hour mark was in October 2002. If the safety streak continues, WTS would reach 3 million next summer.

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Shining a new light on cost-saving fluorescent bulbs

Who's bright idea was this, anyway? Save money, cut energy use, reduce carbon dioxide pollution and save time. Whoever's it was, WTS employee Gary Morrison thinks the idea is pure genius.



WTS employee Gary Morrison is a fluorescent fan.

A free compact fluorescent lamp from a WIPP event nine years ago began Morrison's interest in fluorescent lighting and now he's a true believer. Every light inside his home is now fluorescent and it's made a difference. About his electric bill, Morrison says, "I'm seeing about a 30 percent savings on a regular basis." He pauses and then grins, "That's pretty good!"

Remember the old fluorescent lights that flickered when turned on and hummed like Frankenstein's laboratory? That's the old technology. The new fluorescent light technology uses quick-starting electronic ballasts, delivers bright light without humming, emits little heat and lasts up to ten times longer. Morrison admits it sounds too good to be true, but once people hear the numbers, they're taking another look.

Let's compare a regular 100-watt bulb to a 100-watt-equivalent fluorescent. Both are labeled 100 watts, but the fluorescent uses only 26 watts to operate. The brightness of the regular bulb is measured at 1,690 lumens, while the fluorescent surpasses it at 1,700 lumens. In terms of projected bulb life, fluorescents win again with an expected life of 8,000 hours, compared to 750 hours.

Regular bulbs win hands down on initial cost. A package of two was priced locally at 77 cents, compared to a whopping \$8.44 for two of the fluorescent bulbs. The sticker shock is what makes most people shy away from fluorescents, until you shed light on the details.

The cost per hour based on the initial cost and the expected life is virtually identical. The fluorescents cost about three-thousandths of a penny more. The real savings shows up on your monthly electric bill.

According to Xcel Energy, the average cost of a kilowatt in New Mexico is 5.665 cents. If you turned both 100-watt bulbs on and let them run until the regular one burned out (750 hours later), it would use 75 kilowatts at a cost of \$4.25. The fluorescent would use 19.5 kilowatts at a cost of \$1.10 and would still work for another 7,250 hours.

Asked what would make him switch back to incandescent lighting, Morrison laughs. "Nothing," he says. "I'd never switch back. It's efficient. It saves on the electric bill. It means more money to spend on my grandkids or my Harley!"

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WIPP ERT set to compete in Wyoming

The WIPP Emergency Response Team (ERT) left Carlsbad August 18, for the 24th Annual International Surface Mine Rescue competition, August 19-21 in Gillette, Wyo. Twelve teams from around the nation will compete in the event.

To be eligible, all team members (no more than seven per team) must be employed in the active mining industry and represent the mine that employs them. The competition will present realistic scenarios and each team member’s performance will be scored.



ERT members carry equipment during training exercises.

“The WIPP team has been practicing intensively,” according to Candice Jierree, WTS Senior Technical Consultant, who will accompany the team to Wyoming. “They will need to show expertise in safety, first aid, fire suppression and team coordination. Rescues are practiced from confined spaces, elevated platforms, burning buildings and automobile/truck accidents with multiple victims and hazardous obstacles and materials present. The capability of the WIPP ERT is exceptional, especially when you consider that each member performs another job function at WIPP.”

Best of luck to all WIPP ERT members.



Team members getting ready for competition.

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Birthdays

- Laurie Sparks-Roybal (LANL/CB)**
- John Garcia (WTS)** - August 20
- Missy Villapando (CTAC)** - August 21
- Anita Self (WTS)** - August 23
- Chris Luoma (WTS)** - August 23
- Lisa Acosta (L&M)** - August 23
- Amy Johns (L&M)** - August 24
- Ron Macaluso (WTS)** - August 27
- Kathy Hernandez (WTS)** - August 27



New employee

Phillip Murphy will be the new contracting officer for the Carlsbad Field Office. Murphy, from California, will assume his duties August 26.



WIPP softball tournament rescheduled

The WIPP softball tournament scheduled for August 13-14, was cancelled due to a rain-storm. The tournament has been rescheduled for Friday, August 20, with games starting at 5:45 p.m., and Saturday, August 21, starting at 5 p.m.

Teams are guaranteed to play at least two games with a one-game elimination. If you are scheduled to play and cannot attend, please notify your team captain.

New players are still welcome to join in on the fun. Contact **Raymond Anaya** at Extension 8242 or **Elisa Hernandez** at Extension 8483 for team placement.

The tournament will be held at the Will Merchant Softball Complex located behind the Skeen-Whitlock Building. All WIPP employees are encouraged to come out and support their co-workers!



Deadline nears for photo submittal

The deadline for submitting photos for the Safety Awareness Committee's 2005 safety calendar is Tuesday, August 31.

Snapshots can be submitted to **Mak Walker** in person, by WIPP mail or by e-mail. See the latest issue of the Porcelain Press or contact your representative on the Safety Awareness Committee for complete guidelines and other details.



Ordained

Congratulations to **Paul DeVito (WTS)** and **Melvin Balderrama (WRES)**, who were among four people ordained into the Permanent Diaconate for the Diocese of Las Cruces by Bishop Ricardo Ramirez on August 7. The ordination, which follows a four-year course of study through the Catholic Church, was the first-ever held in Carlsbad.