

# TRU TeamWorks

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

September 4, 2003

## The Big Story Get ready, set, go for 100



As fall approaches, WIPP personnel are busy preparing – not for the cold winter months, but for increased shipment numbers. Draft reports from generator facilities point toward a dramatic rise in the number of waste shipments to WIPP that will begin in October and peak in the spring of 2004. Projections indicate a possible maximum receipt rate of 100 TRUPACT-IIs per week by March 2004.

### Topics

- [Characterization News](#)
- [Transportation News](#)
- [Disposal News](#)
- [Safety News](#)
- [Working Smart](#)
- [Announcements](#)
- [Our Team](#)

### Tools

- [Acronym List](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Back to Main Page](#)
- [WIPP Home Page](#)
- [Links](#)

### Feedback

Contact us with feedback or submit your e-mail address for updates. Click [here](#) to e-mail.

### WIPP Shipments

(as of 9-4-03)

15	Shipments scheduled to arrive at WIPP this week
1,978	Total shipments received at WIPP

So, where does a facility begin preparing for the expected? It starts with people. A total of 12 new employees have been added to the Waste Handling Operations and Radiological Control groups. Two were recruited fresh out of the WIPP training program offered by New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) in Hobbs. “The radiological control and waste handling program offered by NMJC has made the task of finding qualified job candidates much easier,” comments Hardy Bellows, Integrated Waste Operations Project manager. “The program is a great resource for prospective applicants, new employees and WIPP work force needs. Continuing education is always an asset.”



**The addition of two cranes increases waste handling reliability.**

To better handle the projected waste shipments, the Waste Handling group has added new cranes to each dock. The addition of the two new cranes offers obvious advantages. “The cranes will increase productivity and reliability,” notes Bellows. “In the past, we were able to process two TRUPACT-IIs concurrently at one dock, but invariably one crew would end up waiting on the other crew to use the crane. Now the crews can work independently. Another advantage with four cranes, is that if one is down for maintenance, it means only a 25% loss of throughput, versus the 50% loss we would have experienced when we had only two cranes in operation.”

But the preparations don't stop there. The Maintenance, Engineering and Waste Handling groups have collectively assessed the availability of spare parts and single points of failure that might affect the waste handling system. In the event of failure at any point in the waste handling system, the crews want to be prepared to get the system back online with minimum down time.

Waste Handling Operations currently processes approximately 55 TRUPACT-IIs per week.

### In the News



**INEEL's AMWTP seeks certification**



**WIPP trucks are highly inspected**



**Work control: a well oiled machine**



**WIPP focuses on operational safety**



**The Board means business**



**Keep up with team happenings**

### INEEL audit - nothing but solid work



#### Topics

[Characterization News](#)  
[Transportation News](#)  
[Disposal News](#)  
[Safety News](#)  
[Working Smart](#)  
[Announcements](#)  
[Our Team](#)

#### Tools

[Acronym List](#)  
[Archives](#)  
[Back to Main Page](#)  
[WIPP Home Page](#)  
[Links](#)

Before INEEL's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Program (AMWTP) can send solid wastes to WIPP, its characterization program must meet tough quality assurance standards. To evaluate the program, a CBFO audit team spent four days in August scrutinizing AMWTP records, equipment operations and personnel qualifications.

The team focused on treatment facility efforts to characterize Category S3000 waste, or solid waste, such as TRU - contaminated tank sludges or waste water that has been mixed with absorbent materials, then solidified for handling and disposal.

Representatives from CBFO, EEG, NMED, DOE Headquarters, EPA and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality were on hand to witness the formal audit.

Though the interim audit report has not yet been issued, Steve Calvert, CTAC program manager, had assessed the AMWTP characterization program. "Some issues that require corrective actions were identified during the audit, but this characterization program has come a long way since it was first evaluated in May," says Calvert. "Their quality assurance program meets the requirements of the CBFO quality assurance program document."

Once AMWTP personnel address the audit team's Corrective Action Reports, CBFO will verify program compliance to standards. Calvert continues, "Once the identified issues have been addressed, I believe the site will have no problem in obtaining their characterization certification for this waste."



**Boxes of waste are removed from the retrieval enclosure. Each container undergoes testing to determine the contents and any required treatment.**

### Inspections plentiful for WIPP payloads

Countless hours of planning, hundreds of safeguards and millions of miles driving experience combine to ensure the safety of TRU waste shipments. Standards for WIPP trucks and drivers are, without doubt, higher than those of other hazardous shipments traveling the roadways each day.

Upon leaving for WIPP, TRU shipments are inspected according to Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), Level VI standards. These rigorous standards were established for radioactive shipments by the CVSA in 1986 to ensure public safety.

Trucks and payload must be 100 percent defect-free to pass the CVSA Level VI inspection; that includes a radiological check. Only then is the truck labeled with a defect-free sticker exempting it from repeat Department of Transportation inspection for 24 hours.

Despite the 24-hour grace period, some states opt to perform Level VI inspections of trucks and payload at ports of entry. And, the inspections continue. WIPP driver procedures require them to conduct a routine walk-around inspection every three hours or 150 miles (whichever comes first).



**Topics**

- [Characterization News](#)
- [Transportation News](#)
- [Disposal News](#)
- [Safety News](#)
- [Working Smart](#)
- [Announcements](#)
- [Our Team](#)

**Tools**

- [Acronym List](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Back to Main Page](#)
- [WIPP Home Page](#)
- [Links](#)

**WIPP Shipments**  
(as of 9/4/03)

15	Shipments scheduled to arrive at WIPP this week
1,978	Total shipments received at WIPP



Let's follow an average shipment from INEEL in Idaho to WIPP to determine how many times it is inspected en route.

Prior to leaving the facility: Truck, driver and payload undergo a CVSA Level VI inspection. Within the first 50 miles, drivers pull over and conduct a walk-around inspection to ensure the load is secure. Three hours or 150 miles later, another walk-around inspection is performed and so on for the remainder of the trip. The truck will pass through ports of entry in Utah, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. If each state were to conduct a CVSA Level VI inspection, the truck might undergo five such inspections.

If only two states conduct a CVSA Level VI inspection and 21 walk-around inspections are performed in 1,393 miles, a single INEEL shipment will undergo 23 inspections per trip.

***The transportation route from INEEL to WIPP.***



## Disposal News

### Work control: a well-oiled machine



**Topics**

- [Characterization News](#)
- [Transportation News](#)
- [Disposal News](#)
- [Safety News](#)
- [Working Smart](#)
- [Announcements](#)
- [Our Team](#)

**Tools**

- [Acronym List](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Back to Main Page](#)
- [WIPP Home Page](#)
- [Links](#)

**Total Waste Disposed Underground at WIPP (as of 9/4/03)**

43,963	CH drums
2,000	CH standard waste boxes
352	CH ten-drum overpacks
14,576	Cubic meters

As more waste shipments arrive at WIPP, Room 6 of Panel 2 fills up, initial cuts are made in Panel 3 and salt is brought up by the tons.

When asked how salt is mined out and TRU waste disposed of at the same time, Underground Services manager Dale Parrish says, "It has to be coordinated pretty well." Quite an understatement when you consider ten departments, multiple crews, three hoists and roughly 55 payloads of TRU waste downloaded each week. But then Parrish and other operations planners have coordination down to a fine art.

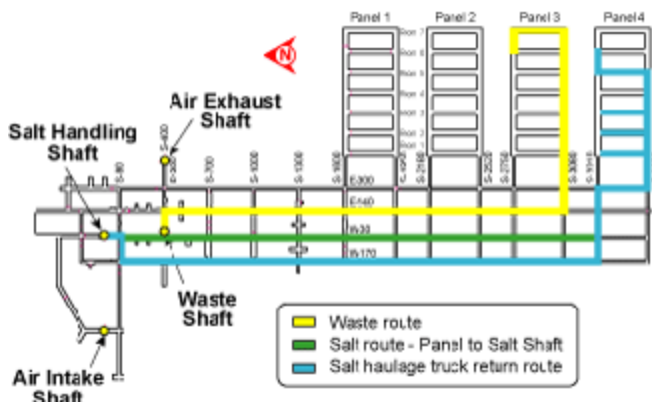
Five days a week – sometimes six if waste needs to be downloaded over the weekend – a ten-person mining crew makes initial cuts into disposal rooms 2, 3 and 4 of Panel 3. The swing shift crew takes over in the afternoon, bolting in wire mesh to secure the freshly cut surfaces. All the while, as many as five haulage trucks are transporting salt to the salt shaft to make way for continued mining. More than 2400 tons of mucked-out salt is hauled topside each week. To avoid congestion in the 33-foot wide drifts, different routes are used for waste handlers downloading waste, mining crews and salt haulage trucks (see graphic below).

Planners must factor in scheduled down time for the shafts.

All three shafts are shut down once a week for inspection and preventive maintenance: Monday the salt and air-intake shafts, Tuesday the waste shaft. Logistically, that cuts one-half day off the five-day work week which, in turn, limits man trips, visitor tours and waste and equipment downloads to the underground. But according to Work Control-Facility Planning manager Curtis McAvoy, "Safety overrides production."

With so much going on in parallel, how do they do it? The answer lies with Work Control. Every morning at 7 a.m. representatives from ten departments assemble at the site's large conference room to discuss that day's work. Each member of the "Plan of the Day" group reports ongoing activities in his or her work area. A scheduler is assigned to each department to incorporate and schedule that department's activities into a worksheet. All department worksheets are then rolled into a multi-page work package which is redistributed back out to representatives. Thus, Waste Handling knows what Surface Maintenance is doing, Underground Operations is aware of health physics activities and so on.

The Work Control group meets again on Thursday afternoons to develop a "Plan of the Week" for the upcoming week. As more and more waste shipments arrive at the gates, WIPP's work control group can be counted on to keep things humming like a well-oiled machine.



### Improving the recordable incident rate



#### Topics

[Characterization News](#)  
[Transportation News](#)  
[Disposal News](#)  
[Safety News](#)  
[Working Smart](#)  
[Announcements](#)  
[Our Team](#)

#### Tools

[Acronym List](#)  
[Archives](#)  
[Back to Main Page](#)  
[WIPP Home Page](#)  
[Links](#)

One measurement used to monitor WIPP industrial safety performance is the recordable incident rate. This rate measures the number of injuries sustained by employees which required medical attention beyond first aid, for every 200,000 hours worked.

In February, the WTS recordable incident rate began to rise. Although the rate was still extremely low by industry standards, we, as you know, take safety very seriously here at WIPP: Our goal is zero incidents.

Both CBFO and WIPP leadership took quick and decisive action. CBFO confirmed its safety performance expectations and WTS committed to performing eight actions to reduce the recordable incident rate:

1. Formally restate to all of WTS the goal of zero accidents and corporate commitment that this goal is achievable.
2. Conduct two all-hand meetings at the WIPP site this fiscal year to emphasize the WTS corporate commitment to conduct its business in a safe manner.
3. Continue to emphasize safety at all levels of staff meetings.
4. Pull the schedule for presenting hazard recognition retraining for all WTS site employees forward to be completed by September 30, 2003.

5. Provide a more precise definition of "near miss" in order to enhance the recognition and reporting of such events.
6. Develop a meaningful safe behavior recognition process for routine work.
7. Use the Integrated Safety Management System/Voluntary Protection Program integrated self-assessment to emphasize employee responsibility for safety.
8. Provide management training this calendar year to improve WTS' ability to manage people in a changing work environment.

To date, WTS has completed six of the eight commitments. The remaining two are on schedule for completion.

As a result of these actions, the WTS industrial safety recordable incident rate has now dropped to 2.2 through July, about the same level it was at that time last year. The official rate through August will be calculated shortly, but we already know that it will be lower.

Reducing the recordable incident rate further requires a team effort. It is up to each employee of the WIPP team to demonstrate their commitment by working safely and helping coworkers to do the same.

#### WIPP Safety Expectations

- Everyone on this site has the right to work in a safe environment.
- Work should be planned and carried out with worker safety as the prime objective.
- If you are not trained to do a job, make sure your supervisor knows.

## Corporate Board: Operating the DOE complex like a business



### Topics

[Characterization News](#)  
[Transportation News](#)  
[Disposal News](#)  
[Safety News](#)  
[Working Smart](#)  
[Announcements](#)  
[Our Team](#)

### Tools

[Acronym List](#)  
[Archives](#)  
[Back to Main Page](#)  
[WIPP Home Page](#)  
[Links](#)

The National TRU Waste Program has gone corporate.

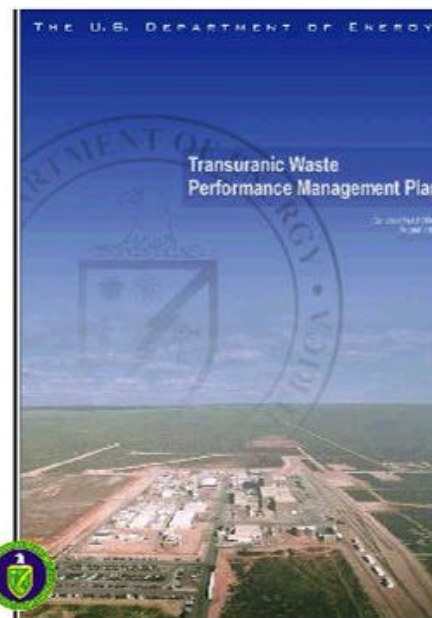
The National TRU Waste Complex Corporate Board (Board) was organized in April 2001 to integrate the TRU waste system into a single corporate business entity rather than a number of independently managed operations.

Leadership includes Dr. Inés Triay, CBFO manager, chief executive officer; Kerry Watson, CBFO assistant manager, chief operating officer; and Stephanie Jennings of Los Alamos National Laboratory, Board secretary. Board members include both senior DOE and contractor representatives from those sites *actively* shipping waste to WIPP. As needed, technical and logistical advisors assist the board and NTP.

The Board meets up to nine times annually, alternating face-to-face meetings with videoconferencing (incorporating a cost-effective page from the business model). All TRU waste sites participate at a centralized meeting at least once per year. A videoconference meeting is scheduled for mid-October.

At each meeting, the Board considers issues including:

- Key performance indicators
- Shipping coordination
- Resolution of complex issues (i.e., orphan waste)
- Optimizing characterization, transportation and disposal
- Strategizing standard procedures and equipment
- External oversight and review (e.g., National Academy of Sciences reports)
- Assistance for small-quantity site strategies



“It’s a big success,” Dr. Triay reports. “It’s a more business-like approach to managing something as complicated as the TRU waste.” Like large corporations, the NTP and DOE operate with a variety of divisions at multiple locations, she adds. The Board serves a big-picture role, integrating work to achieve optimum productivity.

Information about the Board can be found in the DOE Performance Management Plan (PMP), Section 3.1.3, Establishing ‘Corporate Strategy.’ The PMP link is on the bottom of the WIPP homepage at [www.wipp.ws](http://www.wipp.ws).

The Board works directly to the DOE’s bottom-line mission. That is, to safely accelerate the characterization, certification, transportation and disposal of the nation’s defense-generated nuclear waste.

**Topics**

[Characterization News](#)  
[Transportation News](#)  
[Disposal News](#)  
[Safety News](#)  
[Working Smart](#)  
[Announcements](#)  
[Our Team](#)

**Tools**

[Acronym List](#)  
[Archives](#)  
[Back to Main Page](#)  
[WIPP Home Page](#)  
[Links](#)

**LANL**

- Scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory and emergency first responders from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have developed airborne infrared sensor technology that can aid emergency crews by detecting and mapping hazardous and toxic chemical plumes unleashed by disaster or terrorist acts.

The Airborne Spectral Photometric Collection Technology, known as ASPECT, is a high-tech sensor package on board a small aircraft operated by the EPA that allows for timely surveillance of gaseous chemical releases from a safe distance. ASPECT gives emergency first responders on the ground critical information regarding the size, shape, composition and concentration of gas plumes emanating from disaster scenarios such as a derailed train, a factory explosion or a terrorist attack.

– *excerpted from [www.lanl.gov](http://www.lanl.gov)*

**L&M Technologies**

- L&M Technologies, Inc., is ranked No. 149 on the 2003 Hispanic Business 500 directory of the largest Hispanic-owned companies, an elite list that was published in the June issue of *Hispanic Business Magazine*. L&M has steadily climbed the ladder as one of the top Hispanic-owned businesses in America. Last year L&M was listed at No. 157.

– *excerpted from [www.lmtechnologies.com](http://www.lmtechnologies.com)*