

Update 10/9/03

Shipments expected this week: Hanford (1), RFETS (11), SRS (6)

TRU TeamWorks

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

October 9, 2003

The Big Story It's a whole new "WIPP Experience"



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If you haven't been to the SWB lately, you are in for a big surprise. The lobby sports a new look these days, complete with banners and updated exhibits. And the new look isn't just cosmetic. The former WIPP Information Center has been recreated as the WIPP Interactive Visitor Center, complete with educational displays, the latest WIPP statistics and traveling exhibits on loan from area parks. Visitors can also view a video tour of the "WIPP Experience" which takes them on a brief tour of the surface and underground facilities.

The exhibit update and visitor center changes were completed on September 30. All of the new displays were designed and produced by WTS Communication staff. The effort was driven by a need to showcase WIPP information and accomplishments to stakeholders, replacing site tours that are no longer available to the general public.

"Our team produced an outstanding array of displays that focus on major WIPP initiatives," comments Jay Lees, WTS Communication manager. The new video will allow visitors to 'tour' the facility from the comfort of an auditorium chair. The WIPP Experience exhibits and video tour allow our stakeholders an opportunity to see what WIPP is all about. It's a great way to keep the public informed."

The SWB lobby is open to the public during regular business hours, 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WIPP Shipments (as of 10/9/03 at 7:24 a.m.)

Shipments
scheduled to
arrive at WIPP
this week
18

Total shipments
received at WIPP
2,081



New banners in the SWB lobby portray WIPP historical milestones.



A young visitor enjoys one of the new displays in the WIPP Interactive Visitor Center.

In the news



Survive and thrive



Rubber meets the road



Waste hoist "ups and downs"



Cyberspace travel



Our Team News

CCP – adapt and thrive



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In the world of radioactive waste management, it pays to be flexible. Programs that can readily adapt to technical challenges are in demand. And programs that excel when challenged sometimes grow to meet national needs.

The Central Characterization Project (CCP) is just such a program. CCP adapts by managing personnel and equipment resources in response to the diverse technical challenges at generator sites where the systems are in use. Excellence is achieved by standardizing those resources across the nation to get the job done.



Last fiscal year, CCP systems were operating at three major generator sites.

The programs were highly successful and resulted in the cleanup of legacy TRU waste inventories at ANL-E, the Missouri University Research Reactor and the Mound facility in Ohio. This year the systems will be deployed at LANL, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and Hanford. Operations at SRS will continue. The movement and successful operation of these complex systems are no small task.

Consider this: Characterization “systems” are not systems at all. They are individual pieces of equipment designed to perform specific tasks. Two real-time-radiography units perform differently and exhibit different strengths and operating limits. The same holds true for nondestructive assay units, headspace gas analysis units, etc. CCP managers must choose the best units for each site from an equipment inventory equivalent to five sets of characterization systems. Although the program is highly standardized, some site-specific training and logistical considerations are required.

Adding to the complexity is the diversity of the generator sites themselves. “Each site has its own unique ‘personality’ and we have to adjust to meet that site’s needs,” comments Bob Billett, CCP LLNL project manager. Billett backs up his comments with hard-earned experience. He served as the CCP project manager at ANL-E and is set to head the LLNL characterization project very soon. In his words, “it can be a whole new ball game each time we move.”

In spite of these challenges, the key to success in CCP’s changing environment is standardization. Though CCP management contend with equipment and facility differences, waste acceptance criteria and compliance requirements are uniform. With this in mind, program elements such as administrative procedures, quality assurance program documents, equipment procedures and data packages have been standardized. Presently, authorization basis and hazards analyses are also being standardized with DOE-HQ. CCP operates under the principle that when a process is standardized it can be reproduced and interchanged. The principle has held true. CCP not only survived, but thrived to become the national leader in the field of TRU waste characterization.

Haulin' TRU

With more than four million miles under their combined belts, WIPP drivers give meaning to "where the rubber meets the road." These drivers transport radioactive TRU wastes from generator sites across the nation to WIPP for permanent disposal. Clearly not just anyone can drive for the WIPP project.



Prior to employment, drivers undergo intense background screenings and psychological evaluations. Among other things, investigators look for traffic violations and/or criminal activity. Psychological evaluations assist employers in forming compatible driver teams. Important, when you consider each two-person team will spend the better part of each week together in close proximity.

Once screened, drivers undergo weeks of training before getting behind the wheel. Training consists of safe driving techniques, WIPP transportation requirements, radiological training (including use of testing instruments), inspection criteria and public relations briefings. Following classroom training, drivers will make their first trip to a generator site. A veteran driver accompanies each new driver to provide hands-on experience and route familiarization.

According to Gaylin Fuller, manager of CAST Transportation-Carlsbad Office, "drivers watch out for each other while on the road." For example, if a driver sees an accident en route or experiences bad weather, he will notify the WIPP site Central Monitoring Room (CMR) and the CMR will notify other WIPP drivers on the route to alert them.

CAST Transportation requires its drivers to check in with the Carlsbad office twice daily, even on non-driving days. The procedure alleviates scheduling conflicts. While en route, drivers must check in with WIPP site CMR operators before stopping at any point during the shipment.

To ensure public safety, drivers are required to conduct multiple inspections throughout the trip. The first occurs within 25 miles of leaving any facility; subsequent inspections are conducted every two hours or 100 miles (loaded or empty). Normally, one member of the driving team will drive eight to ten hours and then the other team member will take over. When not driving, drivers retire to the bunk to catch some needed rest.

On returning to WIPP, drivers will conduct a post-trip vehicle inspection before calling it a day. Asked what they think about on long, quiet trips, one driver said "Nothing in particular; I sometimes think this sure beats a desk job."



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WIPP Shipments
(as of 10/9/03
at 7:24 a.m.)

Shipments scheduled to arrive at WIPP this week	18
Total shipments received at WIPP	2,081
Total Waste Disposed Underground at WIPP	
CH drums	45,154
CH standard waste boxes	2,136
CH ten-drum overpacks	439
Cubic meters	15,474

Waste hoist: the ups and downs



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To ensure the "ups and downs" of the waste hoist are safe, federal regulations require inspection of the waste hoist shaft every seven days. The conveyance, conveyance cable connections, shaft liner, infrastructure and walls undergo weekly inspection. The infrastructure of the shaft includes all equipment, guide ropes, power cables, air and water lines and anything else installed in the shaft that could pose a potential hazard.

To perform shaft inspections a two- to four-person team rides down the waste shaft on top of the waste handling conveyance cage. Team members are harnessed to a SALA block, a retractable wire cable system attached to the waste conveyance. The SALA system is a fall prevention device to ensure worker safety.



Louie DiCamillo checks the tail ropes.



Jeff Graham scales the shaft liner.



Bruce Jeffress checks Kellum grips securing a shaft cable.



Bruce Jeffress knocks loose material off shaft structure.

At the beginning of every shift, a pre-operational check is also performed to verify that the hoist is functioning properly and that the shaft is clear for normal operation. These inspections are conducted by the hoistman, the toplander and bottomlander.



Shaft liner and guide rope on left; cables on right.



Ed Carrasco scales the shaft wall.



Bolts secure cable ends that support shaft station brow.

"Our personnel do a great job. They are very experienced and ensure that all WIPP shafts are in good, safe condition," said Bob Kirby, manager, Underground Operations.



Working platform with overhead protection on the Waste Shaft conveyance on top of the Man deck with platform extensions in the raised position. (This is where the inspection team rides when inspecting the shaft.)

Tight budget? Travel in cyberspace.



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Cyber-trip. Don't look for the term in Webster's. But this tool could shrink your travel budget (virtually) to zero.

Enough with the puns, but we do want to get your attention. You *can* go to Washington, D.C. (and lots of other places) *virtually* for free. We're talking about videoconferencing and teleconferencing (audio) services available at WIPP by contacting TechSupport at Extension 7422.



Give TechSupport a couple of weeks' notice and you can conduct a virtual meeting among 20 or more locations simultaneously, provided those locations operate compatible or "bridgeable" videoconferencing systems.

"It saves a lot of time and money because you don't have to send people away on travel," explains Robert Lopez, TechSupport analyst for Enterprise Technology Solutions Group (ETSG/NCI). Lopez provides a quick demonstration of specialized equipment with names like "PictureTel" and "Elmo."

Presto. We're on-camera with a 360-degree view of the conference room. The system accommodates a gamut of visual media, including color copies, slides, videotape, live television feeds, Internet or presentation software such as PowerPoint, via laptop computer as needed.

John Angelis, ETSG/NCI manager, quickly acknowledges that videoconferencing has "dramatically" increased in "direct correlation" to reductions in travel budgets. This becomes a cost-cutting no-brainer when you hear Angelis speak those magic words: "no charge to WIPP participants." ETSG provides contracted networking services for WIPP.

A cyber-trip to D.C. can save an employee an estimated \$1,900.43 in transportation, meals and lodging for a typical three-day round-trip to D. C., says Ellen Harkness, who processes actual travel expenses in WTS Business Management. She readily agrees: Videoconferencing offers "significant savings" compared to actual travel, in cases where business can be conducted virtually.

Actually, teleconferencing has existed at some level for years, originally at WIPP's Carlsbad offices. Later, a WIPP site studio was set up. A second video center was added at the Skeen-Whitlock Building. Carlsbad Field Office is the most frequent WIPP user of videoconferencing; sometimes linking 20 or more DOE sites.

Videoconferencing takes center stage because of obvious cost-avoidance benefits, explains Angelis. Lesser-known, on-demand teleconferencing is equally cost-effective for up to seven participants with what Angelis describes as internal "conferencing bridges." In FY01, WIPP switched to Worldcom teleconferencing, at an average rate of 7 cents/minute, a whopping 10 times cheaper than the prior service at 70 cents/minute.

As a useful reminder, Angelis explains that every telephone on-site is capable of patching together three conferees, including two externally, without any technical services.

**Working
Smart
means
actively
identifying
and using
cost- and
labor-
saving
technology.**

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"... the lobby renovation, looks GREAT! It's a nice change and very pleasing to the eye, not to mention educational."

**Creta Kirkes,
WTS National
TRU Programs**

Lion Award Winner

The WTS Central Characterization Project SRS Program has been awarded Washington Group Energy and Environment's Lion Award for "Project of the Year." The award highlights the success of this important project and the CCP/SRS team that made it possible.



The multi-disciplinary team was established at SRS to enhance site TRU waste characterization, certification and shipping capabilities. The team was tasked with accelerating the cleanup of SRS legacy TRU waste and with assisting Mound project closure efforts. Beset by initial equipment, logistical and interface challenges, the team succeeded in shipping more than 4,400 waste drums to WIPP and met the Mound closure milestone two weeks ahead of schedule. The CCP/SRS team is now gearing up to meet a September 2006 clean-up schedule of the site's remaining 24,000 drums and 1,000 boxes of TRU waste.

The CCP/SRS team is also a finalist for the overall Washington Group Lion Award for "Project of the Year" that will be announced later this month. Nomination for this award puts the team in the running with the best projects from each corporate division and company.

S. M. Stoller

Sharon Brady has been appointed as assistant vice president of Stoller Corporation. In this capacity, she will continue to function as the business manager for the Grand Junction contract and as a member of the Stoller-Navarro Joint Venture Board. In addition, Sharon will be the corporate director for Human Resource Services.

