

WIPP Quick Facts (As of 2-26-13)

11,112

Shipments received since opening
(10,483 CH and 629 RH)

85,498

Cubic meters of waste disposed
(85,185 CH and 313 RH)

165,172

Containers disposed in the
underground
(164,545 CH and 627 RH)



WIPP exhibit and truck at Waste Management 2013

The annual Waste Management Conference is scheduled in Phoenix, AZ on February 24 -28. The conference, often referred to as one of the leading international conferences for the management of radioactive material, attracted over 2,200 participants last year.

David Huizenga, senior advisor for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management, served as a panelist for the event's plenary session and had high praise for WIPP in his speech to participants.

"WIPP is a national asset that shows what we can achieve and what lessons we have learned about the disposal of nuclear waste," he said.

This year, WIPP will not only have an

WIPP launches two-county safety project

More than 50 leaders from oil & gas, potash, law enforcement, federal, state and local governments met at a halfway point between Lea and Eddy counties to discuss how the area's traffic-related accidents could not only be reduced, but prevented. January 30 marked the first meeting of the Southeastern New Mexico Roadway Safety Integrated Project (RSIP).

U.S. Department of Energy Carlsbad Field Office Manager Joe Franco and Farok Sharif, Nuclear Waste Partnership president and project manager, offered to coordinate a two-county effort to identify roadway hazards and seek solutions to the area's rising number of vehicle accidents.



Jal, NM City Manager Curtis Shrader provides input at the first meeting of the Roadway Safety Integrated Project.

In August 2012, Franco chartered a Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) team to analyze crash data in the WIPP area between Lea and Eddy counties where two employee fatalities had occurred. Lina Pacheco, RSIP team lead, said the data showed an increasing number of calls for WIPP emergency medical assistance. Because of its remote location, WIPP maintains mutual aid agreements with Lea and Eddy counties to provide first response until county or state responders arrive.

The team's job was to identify traffic hotspots, accident frequency and causal factors, followed by recommendations to improve roadway safety. As an initial step, WIPP employees were required to take a defensive driving course.

"The quest led to a broader picture," said Pacheco.

Each day thousands of employees from the nuclear, oil & gas and potash industries share area roads with the general public. The traffic mix includes pick-up trucks, motorcycles, passenger vehicles and semi-tractor trailers that service more than 17,000 active wells in the two-county area. According to the New Mexico Department of Transportation, southeast New Mexico leads the state in density of heavy commercial vehicles.

Jal, NM City Manager Curtis Shrader opened discussions by emphasizing the need to plan for and manage economic growth. He thanked the hosts and participants for their willingness to tackle the area's traffic-related accidents. Animated group discussions centered on driver accountability, concerns about wildcat operations in the state, rural road conditions, near-term solutions and long-term planning for roadway improvement funds.

The group unanimously supported the effort with numerous individuals, companies

exhibit where participants can ask questions and learn more about the project, but a roadshow will also be present.

This roadshow will consist of three HalfPACT's and will focus on the newly approved shielded containers for use with remote-handled transuranic waste. The focus will not only be on the transportation of these containers, but how they will be handled and disposed of once at WIPP.

Above, U.S. Department of Energy Carlsbad Field Office Manager Joe Franco with two other WM participants at the WIPP exhibit. Below, three HalfPACTs on a WIPP truck parked inside the Exhibit Hall.



and agencies offering diverse expertise and resources to assist. A second RSIP meeting is planned soon.



Radiochemistry webinar series finding rapid success

Oba Vincent expected about 30 people to sign up for the webinar. As the director of the National Analytical Management Program (NAMP), that sounded like a reasonable number. After all, how many people would you expect to sign up for a graduate-level discussion titled Overview of Actinides? The answer: about 150.

The response to the webinar was stunning and Vincent knew the program had really tapped into an unmet need. The series includes presenters with doctorates from reputable universities, therefore providing a rare opportunity for continuing education in the field of radiochemistry. And the cost? Free.

Dr. Alena Paulenova of Oregon State University presented the first webinar in April 2012. Eight more webinars have followed and interest has not subsided.

"Interest is accelerating," said Vincent, whose primary job is senior strategist for the U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO). "The webinar held in December had 298 participants registered in advance."

Those participating are not only joining in from the United States, either. Vincent says that the sessions are attracting radiochemistry professionals from around the globe. Another webinar was held early this month on Neptunium Chemistry and late this month the final webinar of this series on Trivalent Actinides will take place.

More webinars aren't scheduled, yet, but they're already in the planning stages. In fact, NAMP already has ideas for about 20 more, enough to fill the schedule for about two years.

The CBFO has led NAMP since 2010. The program's objective is to coordinate analytical capabilities for responding to a national radiological event. Twelve

Hellen Chiou named candidate in U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

The U.S. Department of Education has announced the selection of Carlsbad NM High School senior Hellen Chiou as a candidate in the 2013 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Scholars are selected on the basis of superior academic and artistic achievements, leadership qualities, strong character and involvement in community and school activities.

Chiou is the daughter of Drs. Yann-Ping Way and Hung-Cheng Chiou, who works for the U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad Field Office.

"My wife and I are proud of Hellen being selected as a candidate," said her father. "This type of recognition is a great reflection on her dedication to

her studies and the hard work of the teachers in the Carlsbad School District who have helped her succeed along the way."

Her parents specifically wanted to thank Carlsbad High School Principal Mark Driskell for his leadership and for his focus on the academic success of all high school students when he became principal a few years ago.

"With the right parent support and the student's own focus, we believe that every student in Carlsbad can succeed in reaching their potential," Chiou's father added.

In May, the Commission on Presidential Scholars will select one young man and one young woman from each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and U.S. students living abroad; 15 students at-large; and up to 20 students from the creative and performing arts. Scholars will be invited to Washington, DC for a recognition ceremony and to participate in events and activities with their elected representatives, educators and other leading individuals in public life.

Hellen Chiou has lived in Carlsbad and attended the Carlsbad Municipal Schools since she was in first grade.

laboratories across the country currently are participating in the NAMP, two of which are in New Mexico: Sandia National Laboratories and WIPP Laboratories. Six of the NAMP laboratories have also joined the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Response Laboratory Network (ERLN), which ties together labs from multiple federal agencies.

According to Vincent, the addition of the NAMP labs to that network has doubled the nation's capacity to respond to a radiological event. The benefit to the nation is expected to grow as NAMP activities lead to an increased standardization in training and laboratory requirements.

The webinar series is part of NAMP's education and training initiative that allows networking and educational advancement for radiochemistry professionals. More information is available on the NAMP Website at www.inl.gov/namp.

In the photo above, Jessie Welch performs work at WIPP Laboratories in Carlsbad, NM. The lab is a member of both NAMP and the ERLN.



Caution signs like the one above are positioned to be visible from any direction vehicles approach the temporary traffic signal at Lea and Canyon Streets in Carlsbad, NM.



Temporary traffic signal in place during Carlsbad Relief Route roadwork

A temporary traffic signal is in place at the intersection of Lea and Canyon Streets and ready to go due to roadwork on the WIPP Relief Route around Carlsbad. While the work is being done, shipments to WIPP from the north will be directed to Carlsbad's western truck route (see map below). The trucks will come through town on Lea Street to Canyon Street and then head to WIPP on Highway 62/180. The designated detour avoids the city's most congested thoroughfares, Pierce Street and Canal Street.

Employees and stakeholders traveling in the vicinity are encouraged to be careful and watch out for drivers who may not be accustomed to having a traffic signal in that location.

Roadwork on the Carlsbad Relief Route is expected to take about six months.



Senator Gay Kernan, Representative Donald Bratton, New Mexico Environment Department Secretary David Martin, Representative Nora Espinoza and Representative David Gallegos were among the early morning crowd.



Attorney General Gary King shares a story about WIPP's early days when he was a college student and his father, Bruce King, was the governor. Looking on are Secretary Martin, Senator Kernan, Senator Leavell, Farok Sharif and Representative Ron Griggs.



Nuclear Waste Partnership President and Project Manager Farok Sharif and Representative Bill Gray.



CBFO provides WIPP update to state of New Mexico

CBFO Manager Joe Franco was in Santa Fe, NM recently to give a presentation to an early-morning gathering of state legislators and officials, who came to hear an update on the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and ask questions. The WIPP Legislative Breakfast is an annual event held during the state's legislative session that covers yearly highlights and other items of importance to New Mexico.

This year's New Mexico-specific topics included the alternate southern route in southeast New Mexico, the cleanup of legacy transuranic waste from Sandia National Laboratories and the Los Alamos National Laboratory Framework Agreement to clean up transuranic waste stored above-ground at the laboratory.

This was Franco's first time to provide the legislative update, but he wasn't the only first-timer there. The event is sponsored by southeast New Mexico legislators, which included two newly elected legislators, Senator Ron Griggs and Representative David Gallegos. They joined Senator Carroll Leavell, Senator Gay Kernan, Representative Donald Bratton, Representative Bill Gray and Representative Cathrynn Brown, as well as other legislators from across the state. The event's emcee was Senator Leavell.

Other state officials in attendance included New Mexico Environment Department Secretary David Martin, Department of Public Safety Secretary Gordon Eden and Attorney General Gary King. Lt. Governor John Sanchez's Chief of Staff Mark Van Dyke was also there.

At right, David Franco operates a roof bolter in the WIPP underground.



Sam Porras and Ray Tavaréz show Farok Sharif the work done on a TRU DOCK.



Kirk Nance verifies the distance between newly painted markers that are part of pallet storage locations inside the Waste Handling Building.



Wes McCarty operates mining equipment in the WIPP underground.



Maintenance projects a boost for WIPP infrastructure

The list of some maintenance projects in the works at WIPP is shortening, as the projects annual planned maintenance evolution nears an end. Just like at any other facility or even home, regular maintenance keeps your infrastructure strong and capable of serving its intended purpose. While the plant has been in operation for nearly 14 years, many of WIPP's facilities are more than 25 years old.

The maintenance projects have included extensive work in the underground -- ventilation, mining, bolting and otherwise addressing issues related to the movement of the salt, called salt creep. One of the major projects was re-mining about 2,000 feet of the floor in the main transport route for waste disposal.

A lot of work has also been underway on the surface. Projects have included work on overhead cranes, installation of new mats on the docks where employees unload waste from shipping containers, work on the fire suppression system and floor coating in several areas in the Waste Handling Building.

Shipments to WIPP are expected to resume at the end of the month.



The U.S. Department of Energy Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

To be added to the TRU TeamWorks update notification list or to submit comments or suggestions, please contact us at TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws.