

## WIPP Quick Facts (As of 3-6-07)

**5,521**

Shipments received since opening

**46,132**

Cubic meters of waste disposed

**87,518**

Containers disposed in the underground

## GNEP scoping meeting attracts large crowd

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant's safety record was touted at a public scoping meeting Feb. 27 as a major reason the Eddy/Lea County area should host Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) facilities.



Dr. Paul Lisowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fuel Cycle Management, for the DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy, responds to questions from a reporter from KBIM-TV based in Roswell, N.M.

More than 200 people attended the meeting at the Pecos River Village Conference Center held by the Department of Energy's Office of Nuclear Energy as part of the development of a GNEP programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Thirteen locations, including eight Department of Energy (DOE) sites, are being considered for one or more of three facilities: a nuclear fuel recycling center, an advanced recycling reactor, and an advanced fuel cycle research facility.

Scoping meetings were held in Carlsbad and Hobbs regarding one of the locations — a site in western Lea County proposed by the Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance, a public-private partnership, for a nuclear fuel recycling center and an advanced recycling reactor.

A meeting was also held in Roswell, where another site for the same two facilities is being proposed, as well as in Los Alamos, where the national laboratory is under consideration for an advanced fuel cycle research facility.

In addition to promoting carbon-free nuclear energy development and energy security, GNEP seeks to move the U.S. from using a once-through to a closed fuel cycle — where spent nuclear fuel from reactors is recycled rather than simply disposed of in a geologic repository — while addressing proliferation concerns that led to a halt to reprocessing in the 1970s.

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**How to submit comments  
on GNEP**

Comments may be:

**E-mailed**  
[GNEP-PEIS@nuclear.energy.gov](mailto:GNEP-PEIS@nuclear.energy.gov)

**Provided via phone toll-free**  
1- 866-645-7803

**Faxed toll free**  
866-645-7807

**Mailed**  
Mr. Timothy A. Frazier  
Office of Nuclear Energy, U.S. DOE  
1000 Independence Ave., SW,  
Washington, D.C. 20585

The comment period ends April 4.

A nuclear fuel recycling center would separate spent fuel into reusable uranium and transuranics and non-reusable constituents without separating pure plutonium, as well as fabricate fuel from the transuranics for use in an advanced recycling reactor. This reactor would destroy the transuranics while generating electricity.

The PEIS will consider moving to a closed fuel cycle using one or more of the proposed facilities and analyze technologies and sites that are considered reasonable alternatives.

The PEIS will also look at international GNEP goals: a reliable fuel services program — under which the U.S. would work with partner nations on fuel availability for nations that do not pursue uranium enrichment and reprocessing — and a reactor program — under which the U.S. would promote proliferation-resistant reactors for developing economies.

The Carlsbad scoping meeting included a DOE presentation by Dennis Spurgeon, assistant secretary for nuclear energy, via video, and Richard Black, associate deputy assistant secretary for the Office of Nuclear Energy, as well as an informal poster session with technical staff. Basic nuclear power information and overviews of GNEP and the NEPA process were provided.

During a public comment period that followed, 50 people spoke in favor of placing the facilities at the Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance site, and one spoke in opposition, citing economic, ecological, and escalation reasons.

number of DOE and WIPP contractor personnel took personal time to comment, along with local officials, businesspeople, and retirees. Letters of support from state and federal officials were also read.

In addition to WIPP's safety record, many speakers heralded the area's nuclear expertise and a broad base of support for nuclear projects from a knowledgeable public and officials. Also noted was the area's long-standing support for nuclear projects, even when other communities were not interested — starting with the Project Gnome detonation.

Some speakers suggested that the PEIS consider use of the area's salt beds for disposal of waste related to the project. Other site pluses that were mentioned included low population density, remote and open terrain, non-arable land, low seismic activity, greenfield status, proximity to transportation corridors, and existing environmental monitoring resources and emergency preparedness plans.

A draft PEIS is anticipated this summer, with a final PEIS by spring 2008 and a record of decision by summer 2008.

More information is available on the Web at [www.gnep.energy.gov](http://www.gnep.energy.gov).

**Submitted by Victoria Parker (LANL)**

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## March Birthdays!

**Robert Garcia (WTS)**  
March 6

**Wren Prather-Stroud (CEHMM)**  
March 11

**Dan Standiford (WTS)**  
March 11

**Stewart Jones (WRES)**  
March 12

**Caroline Carillo (WTS)**  
March 15

**Lorraine Hensley (WTS)**  
March 23

**Kay Atwood (WTS)**  
March 24

**James Cobb (WTS)**  
March 24

**Steve Davis (SNL)**  
March 26

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## Interested in WIPP?

If you would like to be notified when TRU TeamWorks is updated with the latest information about WIPP, send an e-mail message to [TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws](mailto:TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws).

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## Phase II EXO Demonstration successful

It's not every day that WIPP's 41-ton underground forklift gets put to the test.

On February 7, a demonstration took place for the upcoming Enriched Xenon Observatory (EXO) project. The idea behind the demonstration was to verify the 41-ton forklift's capability to handle and safely move the weight of the heaviest module of approximately 30 tons.



"The RH guys deserve all the credit for doing this demonstration safely and professionally," says WTS Mine Engineer and EXO Project Manager Dave Sjomeling. "They are an impressive group."

The EXO demonstration has involved two phases. Phase I, which took place in 2006, involved using the forklift to maneuver an over-sized module from the waste hoist to the North Experimental Area (NEXA) to demonstrate the ability to move large modules through the WIPP underground. Demonstrating the ability to move 30 tons, the weight of the heaviest anticipated EXO module, was Phase II.

Eventually Stanford University will be shipping six modules to WIPP. The modules will be installed in NEXA. EXO's goal is to detect and study neutrino-less double beta decay, an extraordinarily rare nuclear process that occurs when disintegration of a nucleus is accompanied by emission of two electrons without any associated anti-neutrinos.

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## Sauer lends expertise to local search and rescue efforts

You never know when training at WIPP will prepare you for an unexpected task down the road. Just ask NCI's Steve Sauer. The 11-year veteran of WIPP is known for his skill with computers, and for the last year or so he has been volunteering on a search and rescue team.



Steve Sauer (NCI) at work at WIPP.

### Join the JIC!

If you are interested in volunteering for the Joint Information Center, call Bobby St. John at Extension 7348.

"I help with computer mapping, time line recording of significant events and volunteer check-in and check-out," says Sauer. "Volunteer check-in and check-out is critical to making sure that everyone is always accounted for – very similar to the procedures for the [WIPP] underground."

Combining his computer knowledge with skills learned as part of WIPP's Joint Information Center (JIC), Sauer recently supported a New Mexico State Police search and rescue effort in the Guadalupe Mountains that lasted about 40 hours. Working from a command post near Queen, New Mexico, he worked from 9:00 p.m. on a Tuesday night straight through until about 2:00 p.m. the following Thursday with very little sleep.

Sauer says his JIC training helped him understand the command structure and information flow between groups. As a member of the JIC's public inquiry phone team, he says knowing what to report and who to report it to can be applied to any emergency coordination effort.

The purpose of the JIC is to issue timely and accurate information to the public, news media and project employees about emergency events at WIPP and/or along the WIPP transportation routes.

With support from his management at NCI, Sauer has found a way to apply all skills learned at WIPP to emergency response and search and rescue activities.

"It's a great way to perform rewarding community service and work in the outdoors even though the situations and working conditions can be very trying."

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## Safety between home and work

The safety culture at WIPP extends well beyond the fence line. As employees, we take our safety training home with us and everywhere we go. But there's one place between work and home that we sometimes overlook – the parking lot.

Below are some tips for staying safe in the lot.

**Watch Your Speed** – At the site or in any WIPP parking lot, including those in the city of Carlsbad, safety rules limit vehicle traffic speed to 10 miles per hour. It's simply easier to stop or change direction at lower speeds, and there are lots of occasions when a sudden stop or swerve will avoid a mishap. Of course, when that happens, it's a close call that should be reported for tracking purposes.

**Wear Seat Belts** – In addition to the maximum speed of 10 mph, the WIPP safety program also requires drivers and passengers of government vehicles to use any passenger restraints – both shoulder harness and lap belt – installed by the vehicle manufacturer, whether on site or not. Occupants of private vehicles, when on company business, also must use the installed restraints. Subcontractors and vendors in their own vehicles on site must wear restraints while the vehicle is in motion.

**Observe Traffic Flow** – Travel in the traffic direction; don't back up in a parking lane further than necessary to clear your parking space.

**Leave Handicap Spaces Free** – If you have the appropriate card or sign in or on your vehicle indicating a need for a handicap space, you are welcome to use it; otherwise, please don't.

Of course safety is just as important when we leave the parking lot and travel on the road. For most of us, traveling in a car is the most hazardous part of our day. Stay focused on your driving and remember to keep an eye out for other drivers who may be less attentive to safety or distracted.

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

Please send comments and/or  
suggestions to: [TRU TeamWorks](#)

