TRU TeamWorks

August 11, 2005

WIPP Quick Facts
(as of 8-10-05)

3,821
Shipments received since opening

30,516
Cubic meters of waste disposed

69,835
Containers disposed in the underground

DOE Solicits Independent Oversight Services for WIPP

Pursuant to Public Law 108-375 -- Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, Section 3145 -- REVIEW OF WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT: The Department of Energy, Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center will use competitive procedures to enter into a contract to conduct independent reviews and evaluations of the design, construction, and operations of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), New Mexico, as they relate to the protection of the public health and safety and the environment.

In accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation Parts 5.102 and 15.05, the solicitation for this requirement will be released to the public via a posting to the "FEDBIZOPPS" website - the government's single point of entry for procurement information. The anticipated release date is August 3, 2005. Potential Offerors will be given 30 days to submit a proposal after which DOE will evaluate the proposals and make a selection. The anticipated award date for the contract is October 1, 2005.

Yucca Mountain team benchmarks WIPP management systems

Mitch Brodsky of DOE's Office of Repository Development is a man on a mission. Brodsky, and a team of eight DOE managers and contractors from the Yucca Mountain Project, came to benchmark WIPP this week. WIPP, the first licensed deep geologic repository for nuclear waste, is not the team's sole stop. Brodsky says the group visited Exelon, a utility company outside Chicago, last month and will go to Ameren Corporation's Calloway Nuclear Plant in Missouri next month.

Yucca Mountain team gets down to business with WIPP counterparts in the Skeen-Whitlock Building.

Asked the purpose of their whistle-stop benchmarking tours, Brodsky says Yucca Mountain is changing the face of how it does business. "We are transitioning to an NRC-regulated entity. We are benchmarking utilities and other DOE sites to look at their business and technical processes, how they are implementing them, the technology utilized and their returns on investment. We are too people- and paper-driven. The sooner we can lower competitions for budget and operating overheads, the more economy we can garner."

Brodsky has a particular interest in program and contract management, adding, "We want our contract programs to set an example for contractors." He says there are a variety of contracts that have been used successfully by other organizations and he hopes to implement some of them at Yucca Mountain.

When asked about the biggest challenge facing Yucca Mountain, Brodsky says, "How we spend money," referring to the project's budget. He says the project had hoped to apply to NRC for its license late last year, but the application was delayed for a number of reasons. Once it is submitted, Brodsky says it will probably take another three to four years for the licensing process, followed by five to six years of construction. He is clearly enthusiastic about Yucca Mountain's business prospects. "We're migrating to digital technology. When we flip the switch on at Yucca Mountain, we want it to be paperless."

The Yucca team met Tuesday in a day-long session with CBFO, Sandia and WTS personnel to discuss site management, configuration management, permitting, document management, performance indicators and project

WIPP View

Going up! - Hoistman Steve Elyasevich at the controls.

Checking it twice - Brenda Buttrey, Dave Kump and Michael Gerle.

Brandon Storment receives certification

Brandon Storment (NCI) recently achieved certification as a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP). To obtain certification, he was required to pass a six-hour test that demonstrated his knowledge in ten areas:

- Access Control Systems and Methodology
- Applications and Systems Development Security
- Business Continuity Planning and Disaster Recovery Planning
- Cryptography
- Law, Investigation and Ethics
- Operations Security
- Physical Security
- Security Architecture and Models
- Security Management Practices
- Telecommunications and Network Security

The CISSP designation gives information security professionals not only an objective measure of competence, but also a globally recognized standard of achievement.

Congratulations to Brandon on this great accomplishment.

management. On Wednesday, the team focused on WIPP's integrated management system and held a recap session of the information shared by WIPP counterparts.

Taking no chances with H_2S

"If the windsock points west, evacuate to the east," cautions a 41-page safety work plan prepared by Southwest Safety Specialists of Hobbs and WRES Environmental Monitoring and Hydrology project lead Rick Salness. The plan was designed to protect workers and the public in the event of a blowout on WIPP-12– a groundwater monitoring well one mile north of WIPP known to contain pressurized brine and hydrogen sulfide gas (H_2S).

Hazmat trailer staged near well pad.

WIPP-12 was one of many wells drilled by Sandia in the late '70s to monitor groundwater flow. In 1983, Sandia deepened the 2,800-foot well through the Castile Formation to more than 3,900 feet, but encountered a pressurized brine reservoir and H_2S just below 3,000 feet. Drillers sealed the borehole from 2,780 feet down to 3,000 feet with a bridge plug (steel disk), 27 feet of sand and 189 feet of cement.

Three years later a retrievable plug was inserted into the well's casing below the Culebra-dolomite interval and the casing perforated between 815 to 840 feet to reconfigure WIPP-12 for use in WIPP's groundwater monitoring system.

According to Salness, the primary concern with WIPP-12 lay in the space below the retrievable plug. Would two decades of pressurized brine and H_2S buildup blow once the plug was removed? Or was there any buildup at all? Backed by Sandia lead hydrologist Rick Beauheim and the help of environmental technicians Roger Simmons, Aurelio Rivas and Robert Stockwell, Salness wasn't taking any chances.

"It took a month working with Southwest Safety Specialists to develop our plan," said Salness. "We tried to address all basic emergency situations. Once work got underway, we controlled access to the area and kept the well under 24-hour surveillance."

Southwest Safety Specialists set up a hazmat trailer on site with supplied air for respiratory equipment and emergency response gear. They established controlled access and staging areas around the site, while instructing crews how to evacuate in the event "sour gas" was detected.

The drilling rig was equipped with H_2S alarms, double-ram blowout preventers and choke manifolds that could be operated manually or by remote-control. Staged, too, was a kill truck for pumping brine down the well to force gases back into the formation, if needed.

Crew took precautions in the event of H_2S buildup in WIPP-12.

"Fortunately, we had no problems plugging the well," Salness said of the six-day effort. "It went very smoothly."

Through the years, more than 70 test water wells have been drilled around WIPP. Many older wells have become inactive or redundant as new wells are drilled. Of 25 wells recently evaluated by Environmental Monitoring and Hydrology, two were transferred to the BLM to water

Did you know?
The WIPP Acronym List is now accessible from the WTS General Manager's Intranet Home Page.

Birthdays

Alberta Farmer (L&M) August 1

Debbie Martin (NCI) August 8

Bruce Faulk (WTS) August 10

Ann Morissette (WTS) August 10

Pat Allen (L&M) August 10

Lisa Roback (CEHMM) August 11

Katie Chester (L&M) August 12

Al Tornabene (L&M) August 13

Maggie McNabb (CBFO) August 15

Sharon Briggs (CTAC) August 15

Roy White (WTS) August 19

Steve Travis (WTS) August 19

Missy Villalpando (CEHMM) August 21

Lisa Acosta (L&M) August 23

Chris Luoma (WTS) August 23

Anita Self (WTS) August 23

Amy Johns (L&M) August 24

cattle, nine were reconfigured to monitor the Magenta Member, one well will be used in the Dewey Lake-Santa Rosa shallow well program, another was evaluated for integrity and remains a Culebra Member well, and 12 were successfully plugged and abandoned – including WIPP-12.

Going Once, Going Twice . . .

You, too, could have owned a piece of WIPP history. This past Saturday, Parker-Braden Auctions auctioned off 17 WIPP TRUPACT-II trailers. The trailers, part of the original custom-made fleet, were approximately 15 years old. Ralph Smith, CBFO Institutional Affairs manager says "The trailers have performed well, but as with any piece of equipment they have a life span. It is simply time to replace them."

Seventeen WIPP trailers sold at auction.

The turquoise trailers were initially used for road show exhibits to educate people around the country about the WIPP project and the safety features of its transportation system. After 1999, the trailers were used to haul TRU waste from generator sites to the WIPP facility.

One trailer in particular held a special place in WIPP history. Trailer # 7 put a smile on hundreds of faces one cold night in March, carrying three TRUPACT-IIs from Los Alamos National Laboratory – the first shipment of TRU waste to WIPP.

CBFO purchased 60 new trailers about four years ago. "With the purchase of these new trailers came the ability to excess some of the older ones in the fleet", adds Smith.

However, not all of the older trailers will be excessed. WTS will retain a few of the trailers to transport TRUPACT-IIs and HalfPACTs to and from the maintenance facility in Carlsbad.

The trailers, owned by CBFO, must be excessed in accordance with federal guidelines, which stipulate that other federal facilities have first choice in acquiring the equipment. After no interest was shown from other facilities, CBFO was allowed to sell the trailers at auction.

According to Chuck Braden of Parker-Braden Auctions, the trailers sold for an average price of $2,500 each. Braden says, in the past, buyers have modified the trailers for hauling hay, heavy equipment and pipe.

WTS August Service Awards

5 years
Geraldine Walton
Bobby St. John

15 years
Elizabeth Young
Richard Hernandez
Andrew Bickerstaff
Stacey Britain
Timothy Boswell
Jon Fuston
Michael Rogers
Ruben Carrasco
Roy Dearing

Stay ahead of hazards in the office

The safety culture at WIPP is undisputed, but safety isn't only important when handling and disposing TRU waste. The office environment has its own set of potential hazards and good safety practices are essential. After all, a recordable injury can happen anywhere.

That's why Diana Murray, a member of the Skeen-Whitlock Building (SWB) safety committee, recently sent an e-mail to co-workers. "Howard Brown reported the results of a safety inspection at the SWB," says Murray. "As a whole, we did very well, but to continue to improve, I think everyone needs to know what to watch out for."

Whether you work in an office at the WIPP site or in town, here are some lessons learned that can continue to improve the safety of your work environment.

- Empty your recycle bins frequently to avoid overflow. Not only can overflowing paper create tripping hazards, it can also be a fire hazard.
- Store items on appropriate shelves and in drawers, but never on top of flipper cabinets. Items on flipper cabinets can fall and cause an injury.
- Pay attention to how you store things. Large and heavier items should be on bottom and smaller items can go higher. Otherwise bookshelves may be prone to falling over.
- Report missing ceiling tiles, as this can present a fire hazard
- Make sure evacuation drawings are up-to-date and you know where your nearest exits are
- Take empty boxes to the receiving area or to the dumpsters
- Store food in rodent-proof containers (e.g. metal or glass)

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

Please send comments and/or suggestions to: TRU TeamWorks