

WIPP Quick Facts (As of 11-28-12)

11,014

Shipments received since opening
(10,395 CH and 619 RH)

84,718

Cubic meters of waste disposed
(83,411 CH and 307 RH)

163,960

Containers disposed in the
underground
(163,347 CH and 613 RH)



File Photo

WIPP receives 11,000th shipment

Shipment Number 1 arrived at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in March 1999 and now, less than 14 years later, the facility has received Number 11,000. The milestone shipment was received at WIPP's main gate at 10:12 p.m. on Tuesday, November 20. While this arrival lacked the fanfare of 1999's first waste receipt, it does mark an important milestone for the project.

The U.S. Department of Energy Carlsbad Field Office-led transportation team manages the largest fleet of Nuclear Regulatory Commission-certified Type B packagings (which includes the TRUPACT-IIIs, HalfPACTs, RH-72Bs and now the TRUPACT-IIIs), has traveled more than 13 million loaded miles and tracked every shipment from generator site departure to WIPP site arrival.

The 11,000th shipment received at WIPP originated at Argonne National Laboratory, outside Chicago, Illinois. The shipment of remote-handled transuranic waste traveled 1,720 miles by truck, operated by Visionary Solutions LLC, one of two carriers that transport waste to WIPP for the DOE.



Photo: NASA Earth Observatory

WIPP's role in risk reduction evident in Hurricane Sandy aftermath

In late October, Hurricane Sandy devastated areas in its path. In the United States alone, the storm left 125 dead, hundreds homeless and businesses in ruin. Many states were affected, but residents of New Jersey and New York were particularly hard hit. Those and other Northeast states have only begun to pick up the pieces, as the cost to repair the damage is estimated in the tens of billions of dollars.

Those whose mission is to safely manage and dispose of radioactive waste closely watch natural disasters. In recent years, wildfires have presented challenges for sites temporarily storing transuranic waste on the surface. The most recent example was the Las Conchas Fire that burned near Los Alamos National Laboratory in 2011. The experience has led to close cooperation among the Department of Energy, Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) contractors and the State of New Mexico to accelerate the cleanup of transuranic (TRU) waste stored on the surface.

In the case of Hurricane Sandy, however, there are some examples of how the risk was reduced for thousands of people due to the national cleanup work made possible by the disposal efforts at WIPP.

Among the 22 TRU waste sites that have been cleaned of legacy TRU waste, four of those were in the path of Hurricane Sandy. Those sites were Teledyne-Brown in New Jersey, Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory in Pennsylvania and Brookhaven National Laboratory and Nuclear Radiation Development, LLC, of New York. Long-lived defense radioactive wastes once stored in those highly populated areas are safely disposed 2,150 feet beneath the desert floor in Southeast New Mexico.



Emergency drills help maintain readiness at WIPP

Emergency response personnel at WIPP have to be prepared for the unexpected. The best way to do that is to practice and a recent drill gave WIPP employees an opportunity to do just that.

The drill scenario involved a fire in one of the buildings on the surface at WIPP. Evaluators with orange vests were in place to watch everything that occurred from the time the simulated emergency was called to the conclusion of the drill. Drills such as this give those responding a chance to practice their skills and also help identify ways to improve in the event of an actual emergency. A safety officer is also always in place as an observer.

The drill not only involved putting out a fire, but also accounting for the safety of those in the building and searching for possible victims. Building occupants also get involved in such exercises by following the appropriate building evacuation procedures and making sure that everyone is accounted for.

"Physical drills, such as this, are regularly scheduled," said Deena Cantrell of the Emergency Management group, who served as an evaluator. "This gives everyone an opportunity to work together and know how they should function as a team."



WIPP employees give back to community

For 10 years, WIPP employees have volunteered time after work to support the Carlsbad community's signature holiday event, the "Christmas on the Pecos." The Blanket Brigade, as it is known locally, involves passing out blankets to visitors boarding boats for a light show along the Pecos River. The community service project, which is led by the WIPP management and operating contractor Nuclear Waste Partnership, extends nightly from the day after Thanksgiving until New Year's Eve and requires about 350 volunteer hours. Pictured above is NWP Central Characterization Program Manager Tammy Reynolds (center), along with Rich Kantrowitz and his daughter Carly.



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.

