

WIPP Quick Facts
(As of 12-16-12)

11,061

Shipments received since opening
(10,437 CH and 624 RH)

85,057

Cubic meters of waste disposed
(84,750 CH and 307 RH)

164,529

Containers disposed in the
underground
(163,915 CH and 614 RH)

An international eye on WIPP: At right, a group of international visitors listens to Ron Parsons of Sandia National Laboratories during a tour of WIPP.



A lesson in salt: Frank Hansen (SNL) holds up a piece of rock salt during a discussion with WIPP tour participants.



Watching the work: Visitors observed surface waste handling activities at

The world is watching: IAEA-sponsored group visits WIPP



The eyes of the world were upon southeast New Mexico recently, as a large group of international visitors came to see the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The group was participating in an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Underground Research Facility (URF) Network Meeting at Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) in Albuquerque and detoured to Carlsbad to see America's safe, deep geologic repository for disposal of defense-related transuranic (TRU) waste first hand.

Together, the 30 visitors represented 19 nations from four continents. A sampling of the countries represented includes the Philippines, Germany, South Africa, Canada, South Korea, Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom and Ukraine.

The URF Network Meeting in Albuquerque began with a status report on underground and other research facilities. Staff from SNL provided an overview of their DOE Nuclear Energy work evaluating four potential high-level radioactive waste disposal options: repositories in salt, clay or granite or deep borehole disposal in granite.

Prior to boarding a bus for Carlsbad, attendees were given an in-depth overview of the science underling repositories in salt with some focus on WIPP.

Dr. Abraham Van Luik, the DOE Carlsbad Field Office's (CBFO) international programs and policy advisor, participated in the Albuquerque meeting and served as the group's host here at WIPP. He said the international visit went very well. The visitors were divided into groups, each having an opportunity to see surface waste handling facilities and then descending 2,150 feet to the underground waste repository.

"Comments about the WIPP tour afterward were universally positive," said Van Luik. "WIPP is an impressive facility, clean, well-run, safe and a model for future

WIPP.

Did you know?

More than 139 international visitors toured the WIPP Site in 2012.

Ready to go underground: Abraham Van Luik of the Carlsbad Field Office leads a group of the visitors prior to going underground to see the waste repository.

First Responders: A group of WIPP first responders poses by the WIPP fire truck: (l to r) Craig Heine, Adrian Munoz, Chris Bowden, Jake Jiron, Eddie Roybal, Saul Rascon and Javier Leyva. Other volunteer members of WIPP's two first

repositories in other nations.”

While in Carlsbad, the group also had the opportunity to visit with community leaders. Local support, from the project's inception to today, is often credited as a key factor in WIPP's success.

The URF Network is part of the IAEA's educational program. Its purpose is to bring together more advanced national programs that include an underground research facility for networking purposes, and to set up courses to benefit radioactive waste management programs in other countries.

Through the DOE, the United States has been a contributor to this effort since its start a decade ago. The United States has offered a course on some aspect of repository science and modeling every other year over its membership term. SNL, on behalf of the DOE Office of Nuclear Energy and the Office of Environmental Management, has hosted the last few courses held in the United States. The lab was responsible for all the logistics for this meeting, as well.

The IAEA is part of the United Nations, which means its activities within the United States are conducted at a government-to-government level. The federal government must approve activities on US soil and participants must be invited. In this instance, CBFO Manager Joe Franco invited each participant to visit WIPP.

Van Luik expressed his appreciation to all at SNL, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC, Security Walls LLC and CBFO whose coordinated efforts made the WIPP tour educational and enjoyable for all participants.



WIPP's safety umbrella extends beyond the fence

response teams not pictured are Jarrad Burkham, Matt Carnathan, Jesse Greenfield, Jason Hernandez, Noelia Saiz, JR Sanchez, Albert Castillo, Darren Easley and Raul Garcia.



Ambulance: WIPP's fully-equipped ambulance responds as needed.



Suited up: WIPP first responders don protective gear during a recent on-site practice drill.



Live Fire Training: File photo of responders at live fire training conducted at the Permian Basin Regional Training Center, putting out a vehicle fire.



Underground response: Emergency response vehicles in the WIPP underground are smaller, but capable

New Mexico Highway 128. Mile Marker 7. The time was around 2:00 p.m. on a day in late May when the rural road's typical calm was disrupted by a crash. A semi-truck and a pick-up truck were involved in an accident on the stretch of highway frequently used by workers in the local oil fields, potash mines and the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The city of Carlsbad is about 20 miles away and other communities in southeast New Mexico are even farther.

Help may seem far away, but that's where WIPP comes in. The nuclear waste repository is about six miles from the scene and WIPP's first responders are often called upon to help in similar circumstances. Some of the same professionally trained first responders who keep the project's employees safe regularly render aid in the event of an accident on any of the nearby rural highways. Agreements with Eddy and Lea counties allow WIPP's first responders to reach accidents much faster than others could be dispatched from Carlsbad or Hobbs and in some cases, time is a luxury that is not available.

WIPP is known for the safe disposal of transuranic radioactive waste, but few may realize the degree to which its safety umbrella extends beyond the plant.

WIPP employs a nursing staff and a crew of emergency services technicians (ESTs) who address the needs of employees that range from minor cuts, scrapes and bruises to illness to emergency medical situations. They also have special training in dealing with patients in the event of radioactive contamination. In addition, the plant has its own ambulance in case someone needs to be transported to a medical facility for further treatment.

WIPP's first response capability also involves two volunteer-based teams: The Emergency Response Team and the First Line Initial Response Team. The teams' primary areas of responsibility are the surface and the underground, respectively. Those members who are not already ESTs, have full-time jobs at WIPP in various areas, including waste handling, hoisting, training and mining, but volunteer as needed.

"Each member's first responsibility is to maintain the requirements of their job and then those of the team," said Craig Heine, a senior training coordinator at WIPP. "Each member must have their manager's approval to attend training and to respond to actual emergencies."

The requirements to be on either team are substantial. The individuals must successfully complete a minimum of 13 training courses, annually. The curriculum

of quick response in the mine.

includes confined spaces, confined space rescue, respiratory protection, basic life support – cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), wild land firefighting, contaminated injured patient, rope rescue, live fire training, hazardous waste worker, hazardous waste responder, first air – CPR, radiation worker-II and underground miner. In addition, there are other courses for specific applications in medical, firefighting, hazardous materials and rescue.

The firefighting skills are not only used off-site, but are also used for the protection of personnel and facilities in the event of a fire at WIPP. The two teams, along with some members from WIPP Security make up WIPP's Fire Brigade. Drills aimed at giving them practice with opportunities to learn and improve often test their skills.

Whether at the plant or in the surrounding area, WIPP's first responders are critical for enhancing safety, protecting property and saving lives.

Successful coat drive: At right are the organizers of the Carlsbad Field Office's "Karing for Kids Koat Drive" service project: (l to r) Chelsey Collis, Ashley Cass, Gloria Sena and Margaret Gee. Not pictured are Heidi Lowe and Jacqueline Castaneda.



Carlsbad Field Office sponsors coat drive for local youth

Carlsbad may be in the desert, but that doesn't mean it's warm all year long. This week, morning low temperatures have dipped as low as 19 degrees and there was even a faint dusting of snow one morning. That kind of weather can make the mornings cold for our community's youth as they head to school, especially for those who may not have warm coats to wear.

So this holiday season, staff at the DOE Carlsbad Field Office launched the "Karing for Kids Koat Drive" to gather new or gently used coats. The goal was to collect 50 coats, but the outcome was much better than that. The drive netted 79 coats, 12 hoodies, six sweatshirts, three sweaters, four vests and two other garments. The collection numbered 106 items, more than double the goal! And this didn't include the many hats, gloves, and mittens also donated.

The items were cleaned free of charge at a local business and then donated to the Carlsbad Municipal Schools for distribution. It didn't take long to know the effort had a real impact.

A teacher at a local elementary school sent a note to Margaret Gee, one of the CBFO's organizers. In it, she describes a young man in the 4th grade who was absent on the day the coats were given out. The teacher had saved him a coat and gave it to him when he returned to school.

"That is just what I have been dreaming about!" the young student exclaimed.

Any items not given away by the school will be passed to the Carlsbad Police Department, which is conducting a coat drive through the end of December.

"I'm proud that our office has such a positive impact on the community," said CBFO Manager Joe Franco, who grew up here. "It's great to know that we have helped some kids."



**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.

