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For Immediate Release

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Receives 100th Shipment

CARLSBAD, N.M., October 19, 2000 – The 100th shipment of defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste has arrived safely at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The shipment came from DOE's Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (RFETS) in Colorado.

"This is a major milestone for WIPP as we work toward clean up of DOE sites across the country," said Dr. Inés Triay, Manager of the Carlsbad Field Office. The safe arrival at WIPP of 100 shipments of waste attests to the safety of our transportation system."

Since beginning disposal operations on March 26, 1999, WIPP has received 21 shipments from the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, 59 shipments from RFETS, 17 from Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and 3 from the Hanford Site in Washington State. During the expected 35-year operating life of WIPP, DOE will transport some 19,300 loads of transuranic waste from 23 locations nationwide.

The 100th shipment of transuranic waste to WIPP left RFETS at 10 a.m. (MDT) October 17 and arrived safely at WIPP at 9:30 a.m. (MDT) October 18.

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During the 794-mile trip, WIPP drivers stopped and inspected the truck every 100 miles or two hours. The inspection stops are performed in accordance with safety protocols developed by DOE and the Western Governors' Association.

WIPP, a cornerstone of the DOE's cleanup effort, is designed to permanently dispose of defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste left from the research and production of nuclear weapons.

Located in southeastern New Mexico, 26 miles east of Carlsbad, project facilities include disposal rooms excavated in an ancient, stable salt formation 2,150 feet (almost one-half mile) underground. Waste disposal operations began at WIPP March 26, 1999.

Transuranic waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, debris, residues, and other disposable items contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium.

For more information about WIPP, call 1-800-336-9477, or visit the WIPP Web site at <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>.