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For Immediate Release

Energy Secretary Richardson Expands Role of Carlsbad, Creating Field Office

CARLSBAD, NM, September 22, 2000 -- Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson today announced that the Carlsbad office is being elevated into a full Field Office. Carlsbad joins Rocky Flats, Golden and Ohio as the Energy Department's fourth Field Office.

"Today we start a new chapter in Carlsbad's history," said Secretary Richardson. "Carlsbad will take on significant new responsibilities, including protecting the environment along our border with Mexico and serving as an international center for the study of safe waste storage."

Under the Department's plan, which is subject to Congressional funding, the Carlsbad Field Office will:

- I. lead a new initiative to monitor the environment and help direct clean-up issues along the U.S. border with Mexico. In addition, it will promote university collaborations in science and technology and the use of clean, sustainable energy sources;
- II. support the development of new monitoring technologies for waste storage, using the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) state-of-the-art facilities as a model, and demonstrate those technologies to the international community; and
- III. host members of the scientific community as they conduct advanced research into the science of repositories and "particle" physics -- to understand the smallest and most fundamental components of matter; and
- IV. deploy, with the help of \$1.5 million to be transferred immediately to Carlsbad, new trucks and trailers that will serve as mobile systems for monitoring and characterizing waste at sites around the country in preparation for disposal at WIPP.

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Secretary Richardson made the announcement from Washington via a telephone link to attendees at a ceremony at the WIPP site, 26 miles east of Carlsbad, where Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), a representative from the office of Senator Pete Domenici, (R-N.M.), and other dignitaries witnessed the simultaneous arrival of three concurrent shipments of transuranic waste. This was the first ever receipt of multiple shipments at WIPP since it began disposal operations on March 26, 1999. The shipments were from the Hanford Site, the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site.

“Just as Carlsbad’s role is expanding, these three trucks represent a milestone in the evolution of this site. WIPP is now fully operational and is delivering on a long-awaited promise to permanently isolate this waste from people and the environment and to lay to rest a Cold War legacy,” Secretary Richardson said.