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# DOENews

***For Immediate Release***

## **U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Certifies HalfPACT Transportation Container**

**CARLSBAD, N.M., November 20, 2000** – The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued a Certificate of Compliance November 2 for the HalfPACT transportation container. The HalfPACT will be used to supplement the Transuranic Package Transporter Model 2 (TRUPACT-II) for transportation of waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. The TRUPACT-II is currently used for transportation of waste to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

The new container is approximately 30 inches shorter than the TRUPACT-II. The HalfPACT is designed to carry seven 55-gallon drums weighing up to 1,000 pounds each, but is also capable of carrying one standard waste box or four 85-gallon drums.

Design of the HalfPACT began when engineers from DOE's Carlsbad Field Office and the Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division looked at how to maximize shipping capacity in order to comply with U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) weight regulations. Westinghouse is the management and operating contractor for DOE at WIPP.

While the TRUPACT-II is designed to carry waste in fourteen 55-gallon drums or two standard waste boxes, some waste drums weigh more than normal drums and are called "heavy drums." A transportation carrier will be able to haul three fully loaded HalfPACT containers holding 21 "heavy drums" without exceeding the gross weight limitations set by DOT regulations, whereas they currently cannot haul three fully loaded TRUPACT-II containers carrying the same load. It is estimated that using the HalfPACT will save taxpayers more than \$60 million dollars and eliminate approximately 2,000 projected shipments to WIPP over its 35-year operating life — further enhancing the overall safety of the WIPP Transportation Program.

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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>.