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For Immediate Release

Students Gain Work Experience at WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., January 10, 2000 -- Students from two Eddy County high schools are gaining valuable experience by spending time with employees of the Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division and Day & Zimmermann, LLC at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Six students from Carlsbad High School and four students from Loving High School are participating in the 1999-2000 WIPP Shadow Program. A "shadow" is a student who teams up with an employee to gain hands-on experience in the workplace. This activity helps the students identify career options and develop confidence. Each student spends three days during the school year with a volunteer mentor at the work location.

"This program offers our employees the opportunity to share their knowledge and encourage these young people to continue pursuing their educational goals," said Joe Epstein, General Manager of the Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division. "Our participation in this program is a great investment in the future."

Westinghouse is the management and operating contractor for the Carlsbad Area Office at the WIPP.

The Shadow Program began in 1990 with two students, two mentors, and a one-time visit to the WIPP site. Today, the program involves three visits to the WIPP site and the Skeen-Whitlock Building and includes a full tour of the WIPP surface and underground facilities.

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During the next few months, the students will team with their mentors for hands-on experience in many aspects of WIPP business. Areas in which the students will work include Operations, Engineering, Project Records Services, Property Management, Communications, Quality Assurance and Information Resources Management.

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 and other disposable items contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium.

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