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For Immediate Release

DOE to Host Workshop to Explore Use of WIPP As 'Next Generation' Underground Laboratory

CARLSBAD, N.M., June 9, 2000 – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Area Office is sponsoring the *"Workshop on the Next Generation U.S. Underground Science Facility"* June 12-14 at the Pecos River Village Conference Center, 711 Muscatel, in Carlsbad.

The purpose of the workshop is to explore the potential use of the DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) underground as a next generation laboratory for conducting nuclear and particle astrophysics and other basic science research, and how that might be accomplished.

"WIPP's underground environment represents one of only a few choices open to the research community for siting experiments that require shielding from cosmic rays," said Dr. Inés Triay, manager of DOE's Carlsbad Area Office, which administers the WIPP program. "With an estimated 35-year operating lifetime and the attractive unique attributes of a salt mine with very low background radiation, the WIPP could be an efficient way for the nuclear and particle physics community to conduct research in an underground setting.

"We hope that this workshop will paint a clear path over which the physics community and WIPP may travel to provide a new and unique opportunity for the next generation of underground physics research."

Astrophysics is the branch of science that deals with the physics of stars and galaxies that make up our observable universe. Astrophysics researchers use sensitive detectors to measure elementary particles originating in stars and other astronomical phenomena (including our own sun) and thereby infer their inner workings from a vast distance across inter-stellar space.

The study of neutrinos is one area of astrophysics research that may be conducted at WIPP. Neutrinos are elementary particles of matter that can pass completely through the earth without interacting. They are extremely difficult to detect. The thick, bedded salt formation in which WIPP is located provides shielding from the ever-present cosmic radiation at the surface of the earth that makes neutrino measurements difficult.

Following a full day of activities, a reception is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. June 12. Guest lecturer Dr. Lawrence Krauss of Case Western Reserve University will give his famous "Physics of Star Trek" presentation. The presentation is designed to interest the non-scientific audience. Local community leaders and WIPP project personnel will also be available to discuss the WIPP project and the possibility of conducting nuclear and particle physics research at the facility. The agenda for June 12-14 includes presentations on physics theory and a variety of research projects (see attached agenda).

For more information on the workshop, contact Roger Nelson with the workshop committee at (505) 234-3121. Additional details about the workshop can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us/leptontown/>.