

U.S. Department of Energy  
Carlsbad Field Office  
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant  
P.O. Box 3090  
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

# DOENews

## **Media Contacts:**

Dennis Hurtt  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Carlsbad Field Office  
(505) 234-7327

Dan Balduini  
Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division  
(505) 234-7515  
(800) 493-9768  
<http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>

### **For Immediate Release**

## **DOE to Hold Public Information Meetings On Proposed Permit Modification**

**CARLSBAD, N.M., December 14, 2000** – The public is invited to comment on a proposed modification to the Hazardous Waste Facility Permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). Submittal of the proposed modification to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) begins a formal review process that includes a 60-day public comment period and two separate public information meetings next month.

In its request, DOE proposes to modify requirements for Drum Age Criteria (DAC). The current permit does not address the DAC for certain packaging configurations that are anticipated to be typical of mixed transuranic (TRU) waste packages. The DAC determines how long a container of waste is required to sit after it is closed before headspace gas sampling can be performed. This sample must be taken before waste can be accepted at WIPP. The changes proposed to the permit will establish the DAC for those different packaging configurations.

Informational meetings are scheduled for January 9 in Carlsbad and January 11 in Santa Fe. Individuals attending the public information meetings will be provided envelopes addressed to NMED for use in submitting written comments. Written comments will be accepted through February 9.

**-More-**

All written comments should be sent to Mr. Steve Zappe, New Mexico Environment Department, 2044A Galisteo Street, Santa Fe, NM 87502. Mr. Zappe is also accepting comments by e-mail at [steve\\_zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us](mailto:steve_zappe@nmenv.state.nm.us), or he can be reached by telephone at (505) 827-1557, Ext. 1013.

The Carlsbad informational meeting will consist of one session – from 6 to 8 p.m., while the Santa Fe meeting includes two sessions – from 3 to 5 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m. The Carlsbad meeting will be at the Skeen-Whitlock Building, 4021 National Parks Highway. The Santa Fe meetings will be at the Courtyard by Marriott, 3347 Cerrillos Road.

The public can obtain more information on the proposed permit modification by logging onto the WIPP Home Page, <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>, and from the WIPP Information Center, 4021 National Parks Highway, Carlsbad. The public can also contact Mr. Bob Kehrman at **1-800-336-WIPP (9477)**. Additionally, information on WIPP's compliance with the permit can be obtained from NMED.

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.