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For Immediate Release Emergency Response Training Draws Professionals From Two States

CARLSBAD, N.M., January 31, 2000 – Emergency response professionals from Oregon and Texas will be in Carlsbad Feb. 1-2 to learn how to handle potential accidents involving radioactive and hazardous materials.

The course, titled "Train-The-Trainer: First Responder Radiological Transportation Emergency Course," is taught by members of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant's (WIPP) Emergency Responder Training Team. It provides emergency response professionals with the tools to teach colleagues First Responder and First Responder Refresher courses. The two-day course includes classroom activities at the Skeen-Whitlock Building, 4021 National Parks Highway, and a tour of the WIPP site.

First responders are individuals who arrive at scenes of automobile accidents first. They include law enforcement personnel, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, tow truck operators, and state and U.S. Department of Transportation representatives.

WIPP first responder courses give students information about how to protect themselves, the public and the environment in the unlikely event of a transportation accident involving a transuranic waste shipment headed for WIPP.

The course, offered through the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Area Office, is part of the States and Tribal Education Program (STEP).

Since 1998, STEP trainers have taught 173 emergency responders through the Train-the-Trainer Program to teach WIPP First Responder and First Responder Refresher courses. Students learn about material identification, regulations, response procedures and personal

protection.

Since the inception of STEP in 1988, the DOE has trained more than 17,000 emergency response professionals in 17 states. WIPP shipments will ultimately cross 30 states and 11 tribal lands.

In 1993 and again in 1997, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration reviewed and concurred with all STEP courses. STEP courses include Train-The-Trainer, First Responder, First Responder Refresher, Command and Control, Incident Command System, Mitigation and Medical 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 southeast 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 our Web site at <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>.