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Westinghouse News

For Immediate Release

WIPP Instructors to Provide Specialized Training For Colorado Emergency Response Professionals

CARLSBAD, N.M., January 19, 2001 – Trainers from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) will be in Colorado Monday and Tuesday (January 22-23) to teach emergency response professionals what to do should they arrive at an accident involving a WIPP shipment.

Transuranic radioactive waste shipments from the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, the Hanford Site in Washington State and the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site at Golden travel through Colorado on Interstate 25 en route to WIPP.

Classes will be held January 22 in Trinidad, and January 23 in Pueblo and Rye.

Instructors will teach these courses:

- *First Responder*, which provides emergency responders from state and local jurisdictions with the tools needed to protect themselves, the public and the environment in the unlikely event of a transportation accident involving a shipment headed for WIPP. First responders are individuals who arrive first at scenes of accidents. They include law enforcement personnel, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, and tow truck operators.
- *Radiological Instrumentation Orientation*, which provides students instruction in the proper use, care and maintenance of radiation detection instruments.

The courses are offered through DOE's States and Tribal Education Program (STEP), and are taught by instructors from the Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division, the management and operating contractor for DOE at WIPP.

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Students are instructed in material identification, regulations, response procedures, and personal protection. As part of the training, students will also see, first hand, the truck and shipping containers (Transuranic Package Transporter, Model 2 or TRUPACT-II) that are used for actual WIPP shipments.

Since the inception of STEP in 1988, DOE has trained more than 17,000 emergency response personnel in 20 states. In 1993, 1997, and 2000, 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, and Radiological Instrumentation Orientation.

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 the WIPP Web site at <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>.