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For Immediate Release

LANL Resumes Shipments to WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., April 17, 2001 – On April 19, the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) will resume shipments of transuranic waste to DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

In March 1999, LANL became the first DOE site to send defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste to WIPP. LANL completed its first 17 waste shipments on September 22, 1999. Transuranic waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, debris, residues, and other disposable items contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium.

After the New Mexico Environment Department issued the Hazardous Waste Facility Permit for WIPP in October 1999, LANL put a hold on shipments in order to restructure its waste characterization program to comply with these requirements.

"To once again ship waste from Los Alamos is a key step toward filling the pipeline to WIPP," said Dr. Inés Triay, Manager of the Carlsbad Field Office. "This milestone will help WIPP meet its goal of safely processing 17 shipments per week from DOE sites around the country and will optimize use of this facility."

LANL plans to ship approximately 1,850 truckloads of transuranic waste to WIPP during the repository's expected 35 years of operation.

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WIPP, a cornerstone of DOE's cleanup effort, is the nation's first repository for the permanent disposal of defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste left from research and production of nuclear weapons.

Located in southeastern New Mexico, 26 miles east of Carlsbad, WIPP's facilities include disposal rooms excavated in an ancient, stable salt formation, 2,150 feet (almost one-half mile) underground. Waste disposal began at WIPP on March 26, 1999.

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