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Rocky Flats' 100th Shipment Arrives at Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

DENVER, Colo., March 14, 2001— The 100th shipment of transuranic waste from the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (RFETS) has arrived at DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico.

Rocky Flats' 100th shipment to WIPP left the Site at 10:22 a.m., (MST) March 13 and arrived at WIPP at 3:36 a.m., (MST) March 14.

"This is truly a significant accomplishment in our efforts to remove all transuranic waste from the site and away from the nearly 3 million people living in the Denver metropolitan area," said Barbara Mazurowski, Manager of DOE's Rocky Flats Field Office. "It demonstrates our ability to ship waste safely, and ship routinely."

Rocky Flats completed its first shipment to WIPP on June 15, 1999, less than three months after WIPP began disposal operations. Since then, Rocky Flats has consistently led the nation in the number of shipments to WIPP, providing approximately 60 percent of WIPP's current inventory. Trucks from Rocky Flats have safely traveled more than 75,000 miles carrying the waste material to WIPP. Last week, for the first time the Site shipped two truckloads in a single day, and completed five shipments in a single week.

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“We are making real progress in the clean-up of defense-generated nuclear waste in the United States,” said Dr. Inés Triay, Manager of DOE’s Carlsbad Field Office. “This milestone is a reminder of DOE’s commitment to close Rocky Flats and provide for the safe, permanent disposal of transuranic waste at WIPP.”

The site will ultimately send nearly 2,000 shipments of transuranic waste to WIPP between now and the completion of the site’s cleanup in 2006. Shipments are expected to increase from the current average of three per week to nine or 10 per week through closure. During the expected 35-year operating life of WIPP, DOE will transport some 37,000 shipments of transuranic waste to the repository from 23 locations nationwide.

“Our increasing ability to ship transuranic waste safely and compliantly to WIPP is just one of many examples of obstacles overcome in the accelerated closure of Rocky Flats,” said Kaiser-Hill Vice President for Material Stewardship Marvin Brailsford. “Our workers are gaining ground on 2006 and with each accomplishment, our chances of success increase.”

The 100th shipment contained 28 drums of “non-mixed” transuranic waste in two TRUPACT-II shipping containers. “Non-mixed” transuranic waste consists of items—clothing, rags, residues and debris—that are contaminated with trace amounts of radioactive elements, but not other hazardous materials.

Rocky Flats is a DOE-owned former nuclear weapons production facility and environmental cleanup site operated by Kaiser-Hill Company under an accelerated closure contract.

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 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 (almost one-half-mile) underground.

