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# DOENews

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### For Immediate Release

## **DOE Announces New WIPP Tour Schedule**

**CARLSBAD, N.M., March 14, 2001** – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office today announced changes in the public tour program at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Public tours of WIPP's surface and underground are now offered on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Previously, tours took place throughout the week. The decision to reduce the number of tours is based on safety and waste handling requirements as WIPP approaches full-scale operations.

"Safety continues to be the primary consideration for all activities at WIPP," said Dr. Inés Triay, Manager of the Carlsbad Field Office. "Now that the number of waste shipments has increased, we need to decrease the number of tours to continue smooth disposal operations."

An audio-visual tour of WIPP's surface and underground is being developed for visitor viewing at the Skeen-Whitlock Building, 4021 National Parks Highway in Carlsbad. Anyone interested in scheduling a tour of WIPP is encouraged to call 1-800-336-9477. Because interest in WIPP tours remains high, please call at least two months in advance.

WIPP, a cornerstone of the 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.

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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.

For more information about WIPP, visit the WIPP Web site at <http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>.

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