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DOENews

For Immediate Release

WIPP Mine Rescue Team Wins Colorado Competition

CARLSBAD, N.M., July 11, 2001 – The Silver Mine Rescue Team from the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) placed first in the recent Western Regional Mine Rescue Competition. It was the first victory by a WIPP team in this competition in five years.

The Colorado State Mine Inspector’s Office, in conjunction with the Colorado School of Mines, hosted the Western Regional, June 12-14 in Golden, Colorado.

The WIPP Silver Team defeated seven teams, including the current National Mine Rescue Competition Champions (OCI, Inc. from Rock Springs, Wyoming) and three former national champions.

Faced with solving problems in the field, deciphering a map, and taking a written exam, the Silver Team also drew the final position in the competition. Teams competing in the afternoon had to battle rapidly deteriorating weather conditions.

“Traditionally, the competition in this contest is extremely tough. I am particularly proud of this victory because it was won under such adverse circumstances,” said Dr. Inés Triay, Manager of DOE’s Carlsbad Field Office.

The Silver Team members are Buddy Webb, coordinator and trainer/fresh air base attendant; Robert Rhoades, captain; David Ripley, co-captain; David Penick, gas person; Edgar Keyser, map person; David Sjomeling, alternate; Mike Proctor, first aid; and Richard West, benchman.

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In addition to the team win, WIPP Silver Team member Edgar Keyser took first place in the map competition, producing the only perfect map in the event. Richard West finished second in the benchman competition.

WIPP, a cornerstone in 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>.