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For Immediate Release

First Savannah River Site Shipment Arrives At WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., May 10, 2001 – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office today announced that the first shipment of defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste from DOE's Savannah River Site has arrived at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

The shipment, which consisted of 42 drums of transuranic waste, left the Savannah River Site, near Aiken, South Carolina, at noon (EDT) on May 8, and arrived at WIPP today at 1:40 a.m. (MDT). Savannah River is the fifth DOE site to ship waste to WIPP for permanent disposal. Four other sites were already shipping waste to WIPP: Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (Colorado), Los Alamos National Laboratory (New Mexico), Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, and Hanford Site (Washington).

"This shipment shows that DOE is meeting its commitment to the people of South Carolina and the nation by taking another step toward 'filling the pipeline' to WIPP and ensuring the safe disposal of waste," said Dr. Inés Triay, Manager of DOE's Carlsbad Field Office.

The 1,540-mile trip took approximately 39 ½ hours, including time required for WIPP drivers to stop and inspect the truck every 100 miles or two hours. The inspection stops are performed in accordance with U.S. Department of Transportation regulations.

During the next 33 years, the Savannah River Site will send approximately 1,800 shipments of transuranic waste to WIPP.

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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 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, residues, 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>.

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