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DOE Submits WIPP Compliance Recertification Application to EPA

CARLSBAD, N.M., March 26, 2004 – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) submitted its recertification application today to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) demonstrating that the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) continues to protect human health and the environment and to comply with strict requirements for the disposal of transuranic radioactive wastes.

R. Paul Detwiler, Acting Manager of DOE's Carlsbad Field Office, said, "The information we provided to EPA in this application demonstrates that WIPP continues to comply with EPA's regulations for disposal of transuranic waste."

DOE submitted its Compliance Recertification Application on schedule to EPA for review. Recertification – required every five years in the 1992 WIPP Land Withdrawal Act – ensures the continued protection of people and the environment.

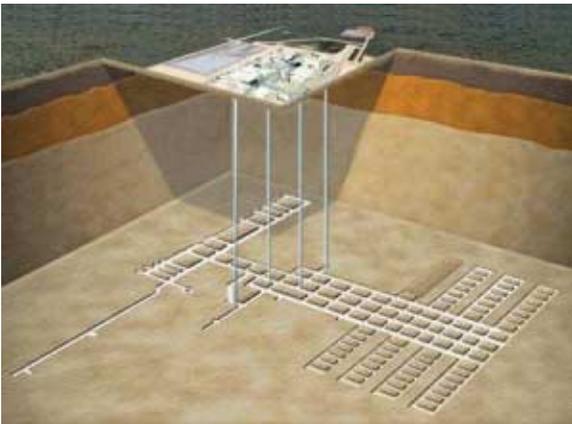
Before waste disposal operations began at WIPP, EPA certified the plant based on information provided by DOE in the 110,000-page WIPP Compliance Certification Application. EPA evaluates WIPP's continued compliance every five years from the date waste was first received, which was on March 26, 1999.

The updated application provides information to document WIPP adherence to EPA disposal standards since operations began. The application also includes new geotechnical and scientific data gathered by WIPP scientists and engineers that project underground repository performance 10,000 years into the future.

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The recertification application was formally submitted to EPA by Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham today. We understand that EPA anticipates taking 9-12 months to review the application and render a decision on it.

The Compliance Recertification Application consists of more 9,000 pages. Electronic copies on CD are available through the Center for Environmental Management Information at P.O Box 23749, Washington, D.C. 20026-3769; by e-mail request at eminfo@cemi.org or by calling 1-800-736-3282. In addition, copies may be obtained at the WIPP Information Center, 4021 National Parks Highway, Carlsbad, NM 88220; on the WIPP home page: www.wipp.ws; or by calling 1-800-336-9477. Information is also available in New Mexico at reading rooms in Albuquerque (Zimmerman Library, Government Information Department, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-1466) and Santa Fe (New Mexico State Library, 1209 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe, NM 87507).



WIPP is the nation's solution for cleaning up defense-generated transuranic waste left from the research and production of nuclear weapons. Located 26 miles east of Carlsbad, New Mexico, WIPP opened March 26, 1999, and has safely received and disposed of over 2,400 waste shipments. WIPP's facilities include disposal rooms excavated in an ancient stable salt formation nearly one-half mile underground.