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WIPP Reaches 4-Million-Hour Safety Milestone

CARLSBAD, N.M., November 15, 2006 – Employees at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) have worked more than 4 million hours without missing a single day of work due to an on-the-job injury or illness. Although 2- and 3-million-hour milestones have been reached on several occasions, this is the first time WIPP personnel have surpassed the 4-million-hour mark.

“Employees at WIPP are among the safest in the world,” says Dr. Dave Moody, manager of the U.S. Department of Energy’s Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO). “I’m proud of everyone’s efforts and know that we will continue to strive for a zero-injury workplace.”

The milestone, which was reached on November 13, was achieved by employees from all organizations directly involved in performing work at WIPP, including the CBFO, Washington TRU Solutions (WTS) and its subcontractors, the CBFO Technical Assistance Contractor, Sandia National Laboratories – Carlsbad Programs Group and Los Alamos National Laboratory – Carlsbad Operations.

“One million hours without a Days Away from Work Case is great performance, 4 million hours is outstanding performance,” says Craig Herndon, WTS manager of Safety and Health. “Records like these can only be achieved with the commitment of all WIPP employees. Employees have to be alert for hazards at all times. It may take two years to achieve 4 million safe hours, but it only takes one second for an injury to happen.”

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration classifies an injury as a “Days Away From Work Case” if in the opinion of a health care provider an injury or illness results in an employee being unable to be at work on any day after the event occurs. The last Days Away From Work case occurred in October 2004.

WIPP is a U.S. Department of Energy facility designed to safely isolate defense-related transuranic waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP, which began waste disposal operations in March 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.

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