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DOENews

For Immediate Release

Idaho National Laboratory Waste Stream Cleared For Shipment to WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., December 12, 2006 – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has authorized the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) to restart shipments from the waste stream that was suspended from transport to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) on November 26, 2006. DOE initiated the suspension after liquid in excess of allowable limits was identified in a single waste drum during confirmation activities at INL. Corrective actions were taken at INL to separate the drum for treatment and to review inspection procedures.

Waste drums are initially examined through radiography (an X-ray process) at DOE sites as part of the characterization activities performed to determine eligibility of the waste for disposal at WIPP. Under WIPP's recently revised Hazardous Waste Facility Permit, the confirmation process is conducted on at least seven percent of the containers in each waste stream designated for shipment to WIPP. The suspension did not affect shipments from other waste streams at INL.

An investigation has been conducted and corrective actions have been taken. The investigation showed this to be an isolated event, and no further deficiencies were identified. Non-compliant waste was not shipped to WIPP.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant 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 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.

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