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DOENews

For Immediate Release

WIPP receives 5,000th shipment

CARLSBAD, N.M., September 11, 2006 – The U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) has reached a major milestone toward cleanup of the nation's defense-related transuranic waste. The WIPP received its 5,000th waste shipment September 10.

"This has been a real team effort. Everyone involved in the cleanup, transportation and final disposal of this waste is to be congratulated for making safety the priority. Each phase performs a service to this nation, and I'm proud to be part of it," said Dr. Dave Moody, DOE Carlsbad Field Office manager. The 5000th waste shipment originated from Idaho National Laboratory.

At the heart of WIPP's safe transportation system are some of the nation's most experienced and well-trained drivers. The DOE has contracts with two companies that provide trucking services to transport waste to WIPP: CAST Transportation, based in Henderson, Colo., and Tri-State Motor Transit Company, headquartered in Joplin, Mo. The milestone shipment was delivered to WIPP by a team of Tri-State drivers.

When shipments to WIPP began in 1999, an average of one or two shipments per week arrived at WIPP. That average has significantly increased through the years, reaching as high as 33 shipments during a single week in February 2006. WIPP drivers have traveled more than 11 million miles to assist the national clean-up effort.

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In the past seven years, the WIPP program has removed all legacy transuranic waste from 13 sites around the country. So far, Colorado's Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site has shipped the most waste – the last of its 2,045 shipments arrived at WIPP in April 2005 as part of a massive cleanup and site closure project. Idaho National Laboratory is next with more than 1,700 shipments to date.

WIPP, a cornerstone of DOE's clean-up effort, is the world'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, WIPP 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 on March 26, 1999.

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