



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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For Immediate Release

New Mexico Environment Department Approves Permit Change for WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., October 23, 2008 – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) today approved a permit change to the U. S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), which demonstrates that 15 WIPP site locations have been compliant with environmental protection requirements. The permit change eliminates continued sampling and analysis at these locations.

Sampling data, collected by DOE over a 10-year period from the 15 locations, indicated that the areas posed no risk to human health or the environment. Last year, DOE submitted a Class 3 permit modification request to NMED to discontinue sampling of the areas, which included a number of mud pits constructed for exploratory boreholes, an evaporation pond and a material storage area. Following careful review of the data, NMED agreed.

“NMED did a thorough job of reviewing this modification prior to its approval,” said Dr. Dave Moody, DOE Carlsbad Field Office manager. “This permit change will in no way diminish our high standards for protecting human health and the area’s natural resources.”

Permit modifications are categorized based on specific criteria set forth by federal law. This is the third Class 3 permit modification approved by NMED for WIPP.

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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 that has been 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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