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WIPP Receives 100th Remote-Handled Waste Shipment

CARLSBAD, N.M., January 5, 2008 – Less than a year ago the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) received its first shipment of remote-handled transuranic (RH-TRU) waste. Today, the 100th RH-TRU waste shipment safely arrived at the Department of Energy site for permanent disposal.

“Years of preparation went into the RH-TRU program before the first shipment ever arrived at WIPP,” said Dr. Dave Moody, Carlsbad Field Office manager. “Thanks to the diligent efforts of the RH team the program has been a success and we’ve made great progress.”

To date, all RH-TRU waste shipments to WIPP have come from the Idaho National Laboratory (INL). INL is one of the nation’s larger TRU waste generator sites and a prime shipper to WIPP. The first RH-TRU shipment was received on Jan. 23, 2007. Last fall, WIPP received a record of six RH-TRU waste shipments in one week.

Two categories of TRU waste are disposed underground at WIPP: contact-handled and remote-handled waste. RH-TRU waste has a higher dose rate at the surface of the disposal container, requiring it to be shielded and remotely handled by workers. WIPP began receiving contact-handled TRU waste in 1999. A revision to the WIPP hazardous waste facility permit in 2006 paved the way for RH-TRU waste operations.

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Shipments to WIPP are made in sturdy shipping containers certified by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Since 1999, WIPP has received more than 6,300 shipments.

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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