



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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For Immediate Release
**Temporary Transportation Route
Established for WIPP Shipments**

CARLSBAD, N.M., September 23, 2008 – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO), in conjunction with Texas and New Mexico departments of transportation, has identified a temporary transportation route for waste shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), due to roadwork in Texas.

Currently, transuranic, or TRU, waste shipments from two DOE sites use Interstate 20 through Texas, then travel north on U.S. 285 to the nation's nuclear waste disposal site. A section of U.S. 285 in Texas is undergoing repair, resulting in weight restrictions for many commercial vehicles.

The temporary route will allow WIPP shipments to exit Interstate 20 at Big Spring, Texas, and travel north to Hobbs, N.M. WIPP trucks will use a bypass around Hobbs and travel west to the WIPP site. Temporary use of the route expires at the end of December 2009, in accordance with a New Mexico Department of Transportation agreement.

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“A number of options were reviewed,” said Roger Nelson, CBFO chief scientist. “This route actually reduces the mileage through Texas and New Mexico, additionally emergency responders along the route have already been trained on appropriate protocols for WIPP shipments.”

WIPP trucks and payloads have completed 6,800 waste shipments from generator sites around the country to WIPP, safely traveling more than 8 million miles as part of the DOE effort to clean up radioactive wastes left from U.S. defense programs.

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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