



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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For immediate release

State Renews WIPP Facility Permit

CARLSBAD, N.M., December 1, 2010 – The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) has received its Hazardous Waste Facility Permit renewal from the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

The Department of Energy's Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) received notice Tuesday that the state regulatory agency has issued a final decision granting the permit renewal to WIPP for the disposal of transuranic (TRU) mixed waste at the waste repository near Carlsbad, N.M. The permit must be renewed every ten years.

This is the first time that WIPP has received a permit renewal. On Oct. 27, 1999, the NMED granted the original Hazardous Waste Facility Permit to WIPP. Radioactive material emplaced at WIPP is regulated by the federal government, but hazardous components, which are present in much of the waste disposed at WIPP, are regulated by the state.

"WIPP is the key to our mission to safely clean up the nation's defense-generated TRU waste, and our permit with the state is essential to that process," said Acting CBFO Manager Ed Ziemianski. "This permit renewal enables us to continue to safely deliver waste from DOE facilities to WIPP's underground repository for permanent disposal."

Combined with the Nov. 18 second recertification by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a period of five years, the permit issuance, which grants WIPP another ten years of operations, provides the facility with full regulatory authorizations from EPA and NMED. Last month's recertification decision demonstrated that EPA, after a thorough review, concluded that the

underground repository continues to display its ability to safely contain TRU waste for the duration of WIPP's 10,000-year regulatory period.

Expanding on WIPP's commitment to transparency, the permit provides for an enhanced community relations plan, consolidation of permit-related public documents on the WIPP Web page, an expanded e-mail notification capability, and opportunities for public involvement in a variety of other ways. WIPP is also now authorized to dispose of TRU waste in Panel 8 of the underground repository.

The permit renewal process included seeking public input at meetings that were held throughout the state. Consultations involving the public, stakeholders, the NMED and WIPP have been ongoing. The NMED issued a draft permit in June, and public hearings were held on the draft throughout August. In October, the Honorable Judge Joseph A. Alarid recommended the draft permit be approved with no changes. NMED Secretary Ron Curry issued a decision on the permit on Nov. 30, and the permit's effective date is Dec. 30.

"The Carlsbad Field Office is pleased to acknowledge the efforts of the many people and groups who are responsible for the success of the permit process," said Ziemianski. "We appreciate the contributions of everyone associated with the action, including NMED, communities across the state, CBFO and DOE Headquarters employees, and contractors—especially those of our co-permittee Washington TRU Solutions, the WIPP management and operating contractor—in preparing the permit application. The success of the initiative is a collective tribute to all those involved."

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.