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DOE Completes TRU Waste Cleanup at Bettis

CARLSBAD, N.M., September 23, 2011 – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has successfully completed cleanup of all Cold War legacy transuranic (TRU) waste at the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory (BAPL) near Pittsburgh, Pa., permanently disposing of it at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

BAPL is the 20th site to be completely cleaned of legacy TRU waste. This milestone was achieved using approximately \$640,000 of a \$172 million investment from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to expedite legacy waste cleanup activities across the DOE complex. This summer, TRU waste cleanup was also completed at the Nuclear Radiation Development, LLC, a commercial facility that supported historic DOE missions near Grand Island, N.Y., and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, Calif.

"The Department of Energy has made incredible progress recently in reducing the nation's nuclear waste footprint," said Dave Huizenga, DOE's Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management. "Many of these goals were achieved ahead of schedule due to the Recovery Act investment."

The TRU waste at BAPL was generated as part of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, a joint U.S. Navy-DOE program responsible for the research, design, construction, operation and maintenance of U.S. nuclear-powered warships.

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TRU waste consists of materials contaminated with radioactive elements that have atomic numbers greater than uranium, including tools, rags, protective clothing, sludge and soil. WIPP's mission includes the safe disposal of two types of TRU waste, Contact-Handled (CH) and Remote-Handled (RH).

Fifteen 55-gallon drums of RH-TRU waste were removed from BAPL between Sept. 19 and 21 using RH-72B shipping packages, which can hold three 55-gallon drums. The last shipment of RH-TRU waste from BAPL arrived at WIPP on Sept. 23.

WIPP is a DOE facility designed to safely isolate defense-related TRU 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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