



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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For Immediate Release

WIPP Management and Operating Contractor Recognized for Continuous Safety Performance

CARLSBAD, N.M., September 20, 2013 – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recognized Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC (NWP), the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) management and operating (M&O) contractor, with the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) Legacy of Stars Award in latter August 2013.

"Safety is central to everything we do, and achieving this elite designation validates our work and the safety-focused culture we strive to create," said Farok Sharif, NWP President and Project Manager, who received the award with Kevin Miller, United Steel Workers Local Bargaining Unit VPP Ombudsman, at the VPP Participants' Association National Conference held in Nashville, Tennessee.

Sharif continued, "I am also pleased to accept this award with Kevin Miller who represents the union labor force that is so vitally important to achieving our mission; without the combined efforts of our union and non-union labor, receiving this award would not have been possible."

"We are pleased with the continuous safety efforts of NWP and its employees," said Joe Franco, DOE Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager. "This award represents the emphasis all employees place on safe work performance for WIPP." CBFO has responsibility for WIPP and the National Transuranic (TRU) Program.

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The VPP program promotes safety and health excellence through cooperative efforts among labor, management, and government at DOE contractor sites. Star status is the highest level that can be achieved and is reserved for companies that demonstrate outstanding protection of employee safety and health.

To earn the DOE Legacy of Stars designation, an organization must achieve the Star of Excellence Award for four consecutive years. NWP has maintained Star status through the continued pursuit of safety and health excellence, the implementation of outstanding outreach and mentoring efforts, and by maintaining a recordable injury rate that is 75 percent better than the average of comparable U.S. businesses.

WIPP was the first DOE site to obtain certification in 1994 and has consistently maintained Star status and received Star of Excellence Awards. This is the second DOE Legacy of Stars award for the WIPP M&O contractor. The VPP Program has stated that it is harder to keep Star status than to receive it, recognizing that sustained, continuing improvement can be challenging.

VPP recognizes employers and workers in private industry and federal agencies who have implemented effective safety and health management systems and maintained injury and illness rates below national Bureau of Labor Statistics averages for their respective industries. VPP relies on management, labor and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration working together to prevent fatalities, injuries and illnesses. VPP participants are re-evaluated every three to five years to remain in the programs.

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.

PHOTO CAPTION: The management and operating contractor for the WIPP facility, Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC, was recently recognized with the VPP Legacy of Stars award for safety performance.