



Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
P. O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

December 22, 2014

Eddy and Lea County Residents:

Recovery efforts continue at the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and we are pleased to report that much progress was made during November and December. At this point in time over 60% of the mine has been surveyed and confirmed to be free of radiological contamination. Soot cleaning, from the February 5 haul truck fire, and other housekeeping operations in the mine are over 50% complete and we have returned to the all-important ground control operations (rock bolting) necessary to ensure mine safety and habitable. With the waste hoist back in operation and available for emergency egress, the number of workers allowed in the underground at any one time tripled from 24 to 74.

On December 10 we conducted our annual full scale emergency response exercise, which was the first exercise conducted under the newly developed Emergency Response Organization. This was a "graded" exercise and while we did well, we will be reviewing after action reports and look for areas that can be improved. We thank our local partners including Eddy and Lea County emergency management, the City of Carlsbad Fire Department and Carlsbad Medical Center for their participation. This is all good news and represents significant progress toward our goal of safely reopening during the first quarter of 2016. However, there is much work left to maintain our current path toward recovery.

Many of you may be aware that the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) recently issued an Administrative Compliance Order (ACO) to WIPP for violations of the WIPP Hazardous Waste Facilities Permit as a result of the February 2014 events in the WIPP underground. The ACO contains a monetary fine of approximately \$17.8 million for WIPP Co-permittees DOE and Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP). By issuing the order, NMED is performing its WIPP regulatory oversight role and fulfilling their responsibility to the citizens of New Mexico to ensure that WIPP and other DOE facilities in the State are operating in a manner that ensures the protection of the public and the environment. DOE headquarters, Carlsbad Field Office and NWP plan to enter into good-faith negotiations with NMED that will demonstrate our commitment to addressing the compliance issues and path forward to resumption of operations at WIPP.

I want to again thank our workforce, the host community cities of Carlsbad, Hobbs and Loving for your continued support and send best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season.

Sincerely,

//Signature on File//

Jose R. Franco, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office