

DOENews

Emergency Situation Ends at WIPP Workers Safe; Fire Extinguished; Impact Minimized

CARLSBAD, N.M., February 6, 2014, 1:05 a.m. – Emergency response teams responded to a fire earlier today at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

NEW INFORMATION

- Worker training and emergency response actions were successful in protecting workers and minimizing equipment damage and impact to the repository and TRU mission
- The second mine rescue team confirmed the fire extinguished and applied a fire-suppressing foam to prevent any remaining embers from reigniting
- Emergency response activities are complete, including deactivation of the Emergency Operations Center and Joint Information Center
- The situation is stable, with minimal impact to the immediate area where the fire occurred
- Investigative and recovery actions are in progress to ensure a timely return to safe, compliant disposal of TRU waste
- For further information, contact the WIPP Information Center at 1-800-336-9477

Information Released at 8:50 p.m. on 2/5/14

- WIPP's mine rescue team has re-entered the WIPP underground and confirmed that the underground salt haulage vehicle fire is extinguished
- The team also confirmed that the air in the underground is clear, meaning it is safe to breathe

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- Three members of WIPP's mine rescue team made the first re-entry into the mine and verified quality of the air at the point of entry; two additional team members then joined them in the underground
- A second WIPP mine rescue team of five members remained on standby on the surface

Information Released at 2:44 p.m. on 2/5/14

- Personnel who were transported to a local hospital for possible smoke inhalation have been released
- Officials at WIPP are working on a plan for safe re-entry to the WIPP underground
- No time frame has been determined for the plan to be approved and for actual re-entry to the mine
- Emergency response personnel at WIPP are trained to respond to a wide variety of emergencies

Information Released at 12:25 p.m. on 2/5/14

- Shortly after 11 a.m., WIPP's Emergency Operations Center was activated
- An underground vehicle used to transport salt is on fire in the underground
- All underground personnel are accounted for and have been safely evacuated to the surface
- Powered ventilation to the underground has been suspended
- Multiple employees are being transported to a local hospital for potential smoke inhalation
- All waste handling operations are suspended
- There is no waste in the vicinity of the fire
- WIPP's mine rescue teams are being activated and one additional mine rescue team is on standby
- Access to the site is restricted
- A news conference will be held at 1:30 p.m. at the Skeen-Whitlock Building in Carlsbad at 4021 National Parks Highway

WIPP, a cornerstone of DOE's cleanup effort, is the nation's first repository for the permanent disposal of defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste left from research and production of nuclear weapons.

Located in southeastern New Mexico, 26 miles east of Carlsbad, WIPP's facilities include disposal rooms excavated in an ancient, stable salt formation, 2,150 feet (almost one-half mile) underground. Waste disposal began at WIPP on March 26, 1999.

For more information about WIPP, call 1-800-336-9477, or visit the WIPP Web site at <http://www.wipp.energy.gov>.