

## WIPP Quick Facts (As of 1-31-10)

### 8,188

Shipments received since opening  
(7,869 CH and 319 RH)

### 65,198

Cubic meters of waste disposed  
(65,043 CH and 155 RH)

### 127,413

Containers disposed in the  
underground  
(127,101 CH and 312 RH)

## WIPP operations resume following outage



**Employees work in WIPP's underground during the extended maintenance outage. The outage ended on December 31 and waste handling and disposal has resumed.**

WIPP is back in disposal mode following a six-week maintenance outage. The facility resumed disposal operations the week of January 4 with all essential projects completed. The annual outage is used to complete major maintenance and upgrade projects that cannot be done while WIPP is receiving shipments and disposing of waste underground. Major projects completed include:

- Re-leveling of the Waste Shaft Station floor and rail system
- Realigning Waste Shaft Station steelwork
- Adjusting the Waste Hoist head ropes
- Two ground control projects not accessible during waste handling
- Replacing valves in the site fire water system

WIPP employees assumed a "crawl-walk-run" posture to ensure that work resumed safely and by procedure. There were no injuries or safety incidents related to extended maintenance outage project work.

"This is a notable accomplishment for all those who have participated in the outage work," said John VandeKraats, maintenance project manager.

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## Sale of WIPP salt to benefit southeast New Mexico



The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) has worked out an agreement to sell 300,000 tons of run-of-mine salt from the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) to Magnum Minerals LLC of Hereford, Texas. The Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District will administer the contract with Magnum, which will allow the proceeds to remain in southeast New Mexico.

In 2008, Washington TRU Solutions (WTS) issued a request for interest in the salt tailings. Magnum Minerals responded with a business plan to purchase the salt and convert it to a feed supplement.

Revenues generated by the sale will go toward area public works projects. The sale also will benefit WIPP's Environmental Management System because the salt tailings would have been placed in a landfill in the future, will now be reused. The cost of the disposal of the salt will also be done away with, which will mutually benefit private business and taxpayers.

Magnum Minerals will begin hauling salt from WIPP this year and it is expected to continue for the next five years.

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## 2 million safe hours worked



File Photo

Time flies when you're working safely. It doesn't seem so long ago that WIPP employees reached 1 million hours worked without lost time injury. And now WIPP has doubled its safety numbers.

WIPP has surpassed 2 million safe hours, marking the fifth time that employees have reached that safety milestone since 1999. A lost time injury is defined as an employee having a day away from work due to injury on the job.

"All WIPP employees should be congratulated," Tim Rotert, manager of WTS Safety and Health said. "Whether measured in seconds, hours or days, every bit of the time we work without injury is important to all of us and our families."

Hours counted include those of all WIPP participants: surface and underground employees, subcontractors and WIPP personnel working at the generator sites. WIPP employees plan to reach 3 million safe work hours by summer. The goal, as any WIPP employee will tell you, is to return home to family and friends each day in good health.

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## Experiment at WIPP may unlock secrets of the universe

Scientists hope that the Enriched Xenon Observatory (EXO) at WIPP will explain things about the universe that Galileo Galilei may never have imagined. EXO is a particle physics experiment that aims to measure the mass of a subatomic particle called a neutrino. The observatory, located underground at WIPP, takes advantage of the low background radiation environment. The 2,150-foot repository, mined out of an ancient salt bed, shields the observatory from cosmic and naturally occurring background radiation.

The final component of the EXO observatory, called the Time Projection Chamber (TPC), arrived at WIPP inside of a solid concrete transport container to protect it from naturally occurring radiation on its journey from California to New Mexico. Exposure to the sensitive TPC could compromise EXO results.



**The Time Projection Chamber, the last piece needed for the EXO experiment, is being prepared to be downloaded from the RH-Bay. It made its journey to New Mexico in a solid concrete container to reduce the possibility of exposure to background radiation from the sun.**

So what exactly is the TPC?

According to Jesse Wodin, a research associate from SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, the TPC is one of the most sensitive radiation detection devices ever built. The chamber was fabricated at Stanford University over the last two years and is designed to detect an extremely rare radiation process known as neutrino-less double beta decay.

Wodin explained that the TPC is filled with liquid xenon-136 and outfitted with wires and sensitive light detectors that can indicate whether the rare radioactive decay process is occurring.

“Observing this rare decay teaches us about the elusive subatomic particle called a neutrino,” Wodin said. “This in turn will teach us about stars, galaxies, supernovae (exploding stars) and perhaps why the universe is made of matter instead of anti-matter.”

June 2010 is the projected start date for the experiment to begin.

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## New software for WIPP-bound waste



For 10 years, WIPP has used a customized database system called the WIPP Waste Information System (WWIS) to track data related to WIPP-bound waste. WWIS provided regulatory assurance that containers, payloads and shipments of TRU waste met acceptance criteria from the time the waste was characterized at a generator site until disposal at WIPP. The WWIS team recently unveiled a new Web-based program called the Waste Data System (WDS) that builds on WWIS success and offers more user-friendly features.

Like the WWIS, the WDS provides an integrated platform for WIPP waste characterization, certification, shipping, receiving, handling and disposal processes. The WDS offers access to new tools and queries and gives users nationwide access to data and functions that match their specific role.

Dave Kump, manager of the team, says he is excited about this program, because it allows easier access in less time for those who use it.

"This program gives users the ability to perform all their work from a single customized Web page rather than jumping around from one form or report to another, which will increase efficiency and reduce errors," he said.

The WDS team has been developing this program over the past 18 months. It was launched in December after final testing and quality checks.

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## Bow-WOW. . . Leigh and Cognac to compete at Westminster

This year's Westminster Dog Show in Madison Square Garden will include a hometown favorite. Christi Leigh of Sandia National Laboratories-Carlsbad Programs Group hopes that Cognac, her five year old Briard, will also be the judges' favorite.

Leigh's dog, ranked fifth in the nation in his breed, was invited by the Westminster Kennel Club to compete in the 2010 show which airs February 15-16 at 6:00 p.m. MST on the USA Network, local cable channel 40.

Known as "America's Dog Show," the Westminster Kennel Club was established in 1877, and is the oldest organization dedicated to the sport of purebred dogs in America.

"I am so excited and proud of him," said Leigh, who breeds and raises dogs in Carlsbad, and has been showing dogs for 17 years. During work hours, Leigh is the manager of Repository Investigations for WIPP.

Cognac, whose registered name is Ch Celebratia's Vintage Eight Four, traveled all over the U.S. last year to compete with other Briards and earn his fifth place ranking. He will be shown by a professional handler at Westminster.



**Cognac is being shown at one of the many competitions he entered in 2009. He will compete in the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on February 15.**

Leigh will drive to Dallas and fly directly from Dallas to La Guardia with Cognac. Leigh jokes, "It was the only way to find a plane big enough to carry him." Briards are a French breed used for herding and guarding.

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The U.S. Department of Energy  
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

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[Return to top](#)