

WIPP Quick Facts (As of 3-26-09)

7,255

Shipments received since opening
(7,043 CH and 212 RH)

59,114

Cubic meters of waste disposed
(59,025 CH and 89 RH)

111,294

Containers disposed in the
underground
(111,088 CH and 206 RH)

10-Year Timeline

1999

March 26, WIPP receives first shipment from Los Alamos National Laboratory at 4:00 a.m.

Hundreds of people gathered at the site to witness the first truck to arrive at the site.

First shipment from Idaho National Laboratory arrives at WIPP

First shipment from Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site comes to WIPP

NMED issues hazardous waste facility permit to WIPP allowing disposal of mixed waste

2000

WIPP receives first shipment from the Hanford Site

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) certifies the RH-72B shipping container for remote-handled (RH) waste
WIPP receives first shipment of mixed waste

DOE's Carlsbad Area Office is elevated to Carlsbad Field Office

WIPP Honors Past, Present and Future in 10th Anniversary Celebration



It has been ten years since hundreds of WIPP employees and supporters cheered as the first shipment of TRU waste arrived safely at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

A decade may have passed, but local enthusiasm for WIPP hasn't waned. In fact, officials note, many of the individuals who braved the early morning cold on March 26, 1999, are still doing their part daily to help WIPP meet its obligation to safely clean up the nation's defense-related TRU waste.

WIPP employees recently celebrated their incredible ten year success story with a fond look to the past, a hopeful glance into the future and a hungry gaze at the celebratory meal. The first day's lunch and ceremony took place March 25 at the WIPP site, while a similar event was held the following day at the Skeen-Whitlock Building. Attending WIPP employees also received a special commemorative coin to honor their commitment to the project. The coin's message, "Securing the Past, Piloting the Future," in many ways captured the essence of the appreciative messages WIPP and local leaders delivered during the two celebrations.



Carlsbad Field Office Manager Dave Moody didn't mince words when he called WIPP the DOE's top program. "I defy you to find one that could compete with this particular project," he said.

The HalfPACT shipping container receives NRC certification

2001
1st disposal room is filled

1st shipment from the Savannah River Site (SRS) is received

2002
The first shipment of waste characterized (container contents verified) by the mobile Central Characterization Project arrives at WIPP from SRS.

2003
Panel 1 is filled

50,000th container is emplaced in the underground

The first shipment from Argonne National Laboratory is received at WIPP

2004
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves DOE's implementation plans to characterize remote-handled waste for disposal

2005
Panel 2 is filled

The final shipment from Rocky Flats is received, closing the site one year ahead of schedule (2,045th)

2006
The EPA recertifies WIPP

NMED approves a hazardous waste facility permit modification allowing WIPP to receive RH waste

5,000th shipment is received at WIPP

WIPP receives record 35 shipments in a single week

2007
First shipment of RH waste arrives at WIPP on January 23rd from INL

2008
100,000th container is emplaced in the underground

First RH shipment from Argonne National Laboratory arrives

Moody praised the agencies and contractors responsible for making WIPP's mission a success. The names of subcontractors involved have changed, Moody noted, "but many of the faces have stayed the same."

Moody drew applause when he praised the companies responsible for transporting waste to WIPP.

"We have the best drivers in the nation," he exclaimed.

But the list of key elements to the project's success, Moody noted, begins and ends with the community. "There's a reason the community is mentioned first and last," he explained. "I really can't emphasize too much the importance of community support. This extraordinary, successful program is going to be the stepping stone in the general area of repositories."



Farok Sharif, President and General Manager of Washington TRU Solutions (WTS), observed that many WIPP employees were likely taking time this month to reflect on what they were doing ten years ago. He asked for members of the audience at the Skeen-Whitlock building who were at the arrival of the first shipment to raise their hands.

"I bet you that each and every one of you have a separate and fond memory about that morning, what happened and what it meant to us," he said to the auditorium's sea of hands.

Sharif lauded the leadership provided by the DOE and local officials, and he praised the cooperation between local communities, specifically Carlsbad and Hobbs. He concluded by pointing out that WIPP's success was truly a team effort.

"Each and every one of you contributed to the success of this project," he said. "We've created a model that everyone wants to have in their countries."

State Representative John Heaton lauded WIPP's commitment to safety.

"You are the people who created this culture of safety. You make it very easy for myself, (Carlsbad Mayor) Bob (Forrest) and others to go out and try to promote this facility. I just can't thank you enough for that."

"This facility is the crown jewel of the DOE, without question," Heaton concluded.

Among those to wax nostalgic was State Senator Carroll Leavell, who recalled seeing U.S. Rep Joe Skeen, a long-time supporter of WIPP, at the 4 a.m. arrival of the first shipment ten years ago.

"I've never seen a happier man," Leavell said.

1st shipment from Oak Ridge National Laboratory is received

2009

Transportation System is honored with safety award for miles traveled without injury or radiological release

First shipment of RH waste from ORNL arrives at WIPP

10th anniversary of WIPP opening, March 26

Leavell also praised recent cooperative efforts between Carlsbad and Hobbs, along with Lea and Eddy Counties. "What you have done for Southeastern New Mexico is amazing. It's phenomenal," he said. "It makes a lot of difference for the entire state."

Carlsbad Mayor Bob Forrest said WIPP has shifted the nation's attitude toward all things nuclear. Carlsbad was the only community to express interest in about WIPP five years ago, he pointed out, while a uranium enrichment facility in recent discussion drew interest from 200 communities.



"Why did it go from one to 200?" he asked. "It did because of you. WIPP is the reason 'not in my backyard' isn't the case anymore."

WIPP's had its share of political opponents, Forrest noted, but the project's commitment to safety ultimately turns many into supporters.

"I can't tell you how many 800 pound gorillas we've turned around," he said.

Special appreciation should be given to the following organizations, which set up booths during the March 25 celebration at the WIPP site: L&M Technologies, American Nuclear Society, Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Washington TRU Solutions LLC, Sandia National Laboratories, Washington Regulatory and Environmental Services, Stoller, TRANSCOM, NCI.

Background

The EPA first certified WIPP compliance in May 1998. The initial Compliance Certification Application demonstrated how the geological, hydrological, physical, chemical and environmental characteristics of the site, along with engineered features of the facility, would safely contain radioactive waste for a 10,000-year regulatory time period.

DOE is required by law to submit documentation of continued compliance at five year intervals until the facility is

Compliance Recertification Application documents continued compliance

Does WIPP still comply with federal radioactive waste disposal regulations? Yes and the DOE has 2,000 pages of information to prove it. On March 24, DOE submitted its second Compliance Recertification Application (CRA) to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), initiating a recertification process required by Congress every five years.

"This application is a reflection of the high quality work that has been done at WIPP for a decade," says Carlsbad Field Office Manager Dave Moody. "We operate to strict environmental and safety requirements designed to protect workers, the public and the environment."

decommissioned.

The first five-year period began on March 26, 1999, when WIPP received its first waste shipment. The recertification process is not a reconsideration of the decision to open WIPP, but rather a process to verify that changes at WIPP in the preceding five-year period comply with EPA disposal standards for radioactive waste. EPA last recertified WIPP in March 2006.



The submittal by DOE began a two-step process. The first step is for EPA to determine the completeness of the application or request additional information for its review. Once EPA decides the package is complete, the agency has six months to perform a technical evaluation and reach a final decision regarding WIPP's compliance with the waste disposal regulations.

Navigating the CRA

The format for the CRA is different than 2004's recertification application. The CRA is now organized into 23 sections that correspond to the disposal regulations in 40 CFR Part 194. Each section includes:

- ⌘ Requirements
- ⌘ Background information
- ⌘ The 1998 certification decision
- ⌘ Changes in the 2004 recertification application
- ⌘ EPA's evaluation of compliance for the 2004 recertification
- ⌘ Changes or new information since the 2004 recertification
- ⌘ References

The 23 sections, along with the document's 13 appendices, total about 2,000 pages.

Public participation

The EPA will soon announce a public comment period. In the meantime, the CRA, any EPA requests for information and DOE responses and all related materials will soon be posted on the EPA's WIPP Web site (www.epa.gov/radiation/wipp). Opportunities for public participation will be included in upcoming issues of TRU TeamWorks.

Interested in WIPP?

If you would like to be notified when TRU TeamWorks is updated with the latest information about WIPP, send an e-mail message to TRUTeamWorks@wipp.ws.

What do you remember from that historic event ten years ago?

"It was early and it was cold, but it was exciting."—**Janice Mashaw**

"Mayor Forrest, Sammy Lopez and myself were standing on the corner of Greene and Canal, and Sammy took that photo, that blurry photo that ran in the Current-Argus."—**Cliff Stroud**

"I was thinking, this is a great place to be on a cold, dark, foggy evening. I'm so proud to be a member of WIPP."—**Tom Fabian**

"I remember coming out in the bus, it was nice and cool that night. I remember it was exhilarating when the truck came through the gate. It was a really positive thing to be a part of history that was made that night."—**Mark Friend**

"We were all excited, it was about three or four in the morning and everyone was cheering and having a great time. We know that history is being made and that was the excitement that everyone had. I'm glad to be a part of that history."—**Mansour Akbarzadeh**

“It was like a football game. A lot of excitement and expectations; there were a lot of people out there that were happy that it finally opened.”—**Norm Whitlock**

“My boss told me when I left Chicago, 'It will never open.' So as soon as I left the opening, I called him and said you're wrong, we made it”—**Steve Kouba**

“I was amazed that you got so many people out in the middle of the desert to watch a load of nuclear waste come through the gate. The cheers that went up were just incredible.”—**Keith Nelson**

“Oh man, I was the happiest guy on earth. All of the hard work actually paid off.”—**Farok Sharif**

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

Please send comments and/or
suggestions to: [TRU TeamWorks](#)

