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File Photo

WIPP employee inducted into Mine Rescue Hall of Fame

Long-time Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) employee Gary Kessler was inducted into the Metal/Non-Metal National Mine Rescue Hall of Fame on Aug. 1, at the biennial mine rescue competition in Reno, Nev.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) established the Hall of Fame to honor individuals with exceptional accomplishments and commitments in the field of mine rescue. MSHA also conducts mine rescue competitions at which WIPP's two mine rescue teams compete.

Kessler received the honor during a ceremony following the competition where his coworkers and he participated in the national championship. More than 30 teams from 13 states participated in the event. WIPP's Blue Team, which is captained by Kessler, finished fourth in the field competition while WIPP's Red Team narrowly missed making the competition finals. The Blue Team took second place in the first aid and sixth place in the technician categories. The Red Team took fifth place in the technician category.



"Our mine rescue teams have performed very well and their accomplishments are commendable," said U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager Joe Franco. "We're also pleased that MSHA recognized Gary with this honor and congratulate him on the achievement. Mine safety is critical to our mission and I appreciate the skill and dedication of the mine rescue teams to providing

WIPP Quick Facts

(As of 8-26-13)

11,555

Shipments received since opening
(10,859 CH and 696 RH)

88,415

Cubic meters of waste disposed
(88,069 CH and 346 RH)

168,861

Containers disposed in the underground
(168,168 CH and 693 RH)

*CH - Contact-handled transuranic waste
RH - Remote-handled transuranic waste

WIPP panel certified and ready for waste disposal

In mid-July 2013, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) approved the use of Panel 7 for disposal of defense-related transuranic (TRU) waste at the Department of Energy (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). Approval by NMED for use of

(WIPP). Approval by NMED for each underground waste disposal panel prior to use is required under the WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit (Permit). A panel consists of seven waste disposal rooms and each room is approximately 13 feet high, 33 feet wide and 300 feet long. Mining and outfitting, which includes installation of electricity, monitoring equipment and air regulating bulkheads, of a panel takes about two to two and a half years. Once the mining and outfitting are completed, the panel is certified by a professional engineer registered in N.M. The Permit requires the certification and submittal of related documentation to the NMED Secretary for review and approval. The NMED then conducts an inspection to verify the panel is constructed in compliance with the Permit requirements. "We're very pleased by the NMED documentation review and its timely approval of Panel 7 for use," DOE Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager Joe Franco said. CBFO has responsibility for WIPP and the National TRU Program.

"Timing on the NMED approval is important because it allows for WIPP to start using Panel 7 to continue to provide defense-related TRU waste cleanup for the nation," Franco said. A panel naturally begins to close in at a rate of about three to six inches a year, which is the salt rock behavior anticipated to facilitate permanently encapsulating the waste and removal from the biosphere. WIPP is currently emplacing TRU waste in Panel 6. When Panel 6 is full, WIPP will begin emplacing shipments of waste in Panel 7. Panel 7 approval allows WIPP to continue to fulfill its regulatory commitments, including: the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) framework agreement with the State of N.M. to remove the above-ground TRU waste currently stored at Area G at LANL by June 30, 2014; and the settlement agreement between the DOE, U.S. Navy and State of Idaho for the disposition of mutually agreed upon CH- and RH-TRU waste stored at the Idaho National Laboratory by Dec. 31, 2018.

extremely well-trained emergency response for our workers, facility, community and entire industry. As manager for the WIPP Mine Rescue teams in 1997 through 1999 I understand Gary's accomplishments and am very proud of him and the two teams." CBFO has responsibility for WIPP and the National Transuranic (TRU) Program.

Kessler, with Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC (NWP), the WIPP management and operating contractor, began his mining career at WIPP in 1988. Since 1994, he has served as captain of a WIPP mine rescue team. Mine rescue teams often participate in various regional and state competitions each year to hone their skills, share lessons learned and continually raise the level of mine safety in the world. Kessler has competed in at least three regional competitions a year for the last 25 years and has competed in 12 national contests that are held every two years. In 1994, he was part of the WIPP Blue Team that won the national title.

Kessler is an MSHA-certified mine rescue trainer and has provided his expertise to numerous mine rescue teams in the country. He has taken part in rescues in New Mexico in an inactive gold mine shaft in Socorro, in an abandoned mine shaft near Oro Grande and in a cave near Carlsbad. On two occasions, under his leadership, his team has served as the backup group staged on the surface while teams from local potash mines have responded to mine fires.

WIPP mine rescue team members serve on a voluntary basis in addition to their regular jobs. Management and coworkers work around schedules so team members are available for training and competitions.

"We're extremely proud of our mine rescue teams and all they achieved this year," said NWP President and Project Manager Farok Sharif. "These hard-working, dedicated individuals exemplify the world-class employees we have at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. I am also happy for Gary Kessler and his induction into the Hall of Fame. This honor reflects the tremendous impact he has had throughout the mining industry. Not only does Gary care deeply about his fellow employees, but he also cares about the safety of every man and woman who puts on a miner's lamp and spends their day working in a mine."

With his induction, Kessler became the third member of the Mine Rescue Hall of Fame from WIPP. Previous inductees include Buddy Webb in 2000 and Joe Baca in 2010.

In the above file photo, Kessler is shown leading his team at a previous mine rescue competition.

First responder training

First responder training

Thousands of first responders along the transportation routes to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) are trained on how to respond to an incident involving a WIPP shipment. An upcoming course is being offered to give trainers the knowledge and skills they need to teach the Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training (MERRTT) to first responders across the country.

The course, which will be offered October 15-17 in Carlsbad, N.M., has been reviewed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and is approved by the Department of Homeland Security and the Continuing Education Board of Emergency Medical Services. For more information or to sign up, call David Lewis at (575) 234-8486 or e-mail david.lewis@wipp.ws.



A TRUPACT-II training unit stands in the background as first responders in Louisiana participated in a training exercise in 2011.

Safety Reminder: Don't be distracted by use of portable devices

Multi-tasking is sometimes considered a valuable skill, but that's certainly not the case when it comes to texting or use of phones or other devices.

Texting and checking e-mail messages on phones is common, but often people fail to recognize the hazards of doing that while walking, biking, driving or many other activities.

For example, did you know that sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds? Traveling at 55 miles per hour, that's the equivalent of driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed!

Even walking while using a portable device can be hazardous. Distracted eyes may not see tripping hazards or obstacles in your path.

Phones and portable devices can be a great tool, but remember to use them only when your safety and that of others is not compromised.

SafetyFest of Southeastern New Mexico registration underway

Registration for the September 11-13

Radiological event simulated for national exercise



The scene is grim: untold fatalities, massive destruction of buildings and fires in the city's economic center. That was the simulated scenario for a national exercise designed to test the nation's readiness to respond to a radiological event.

In this exercise, the simulated event was the detonation of a 10 kiloton radiological improvised nuclear device in downtown Seattle, Wash. The two-day exercise stretched resources, as the Integrated Consortium of Laboratory networks (ICLN) activated laboratories in 10 different federal agencies to respond.

One of those federal agencies was the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Its National Analytical Management Program (NAMP) and Federal Radiological Monitoring and assessment Center (FRMAC) collaborated to represent one DOE network. Their primary role during an initial response to such an event would be to analyze samples and determine what radiological isotopes were within the blast, determine the

SafetyFest of Southeastern New Mexico runs through September 6. The three-day SafetyFest is a FREE Safety and Health event to build awareness about hazards and accident prevention.

The conference begins September 11 with expert speakers and panel discussions about safety issues and industry best practices. The final two days of the conference, September 12-13, will feature classes emphasizing safety in the oil & gas, construction, general industry, transportation, and mine safety and health industries. New Mexico Junior College will provide instructors for the training classes.

Representatives from the Oil & Gas, Mining, Construction and Transportation Industries will attend along with any business or organization requiring safety related training.

The conference, which will be held at the Pecos River Conference Center in Carlsbad, is part of the Southeastern New Mexico Roadway Safety Integrated Project (RSIP). The purpose of the RSIP initiative is to facilitate a strategic approach to improving traffic safety for southeastern N.M. Several area businesses, industry, law enforcement and elected officials are involved in this initiative. SafetyFest is one of the projects the RSIP organizing committee selected as a way to build safety awareness.

To register for the event, go to the SafetyFest website at safetyfestSENM.com. The first day features speakers and the other days include specific training sessions. For more information, you may also contact Melinda Allen (Hobbs) at 575-397-2039 or Donovan Mager (Carlsbad) at 575-234-7586.

extent of contamination and generate plume projections with predicted dose rates. The analysis also provides additional information to refine the predicted dose rates.

This information is key for decision makers to know, as they provide medical care for the injured, minimize exposure to people living within the fallout zone and eventually move into the recovery phase.

The challenge is the high volume of samples that originate from various sources, such as human clinical (typically urine), environmental, air, water, food, building materials, agricultural crops and livestock. The actual number of samples collected in such a scenario is not known, but is anticipated to be extremely high, as the impact to the affected population's air, drinking water, soil, urban materials, as well as nearby agricultural commodities would need to be determined.

"It was very successful," said Oba Vincent, of the DOE Carlsbad Field Office who serves as the director of NAMP. "One of the most important outcomes for us is that it identified the need for DOE to have its own laboratory network."

The collaboration between NAMP and FRMAC was well done and Vincent says NAMP received praise from FRMAC for its coordination efforts.

Much of the focus of this exercise was to test the capacity of the various agencies to prioritize samples and to assess the capability to share information and analytical data among agencies during such a crisis. DOE alone uploaded some 17,000 records.

In the above file photo, Hnin Khaing of WIPP Laboratories checks on a radiological sample, similar to what would be analyzed in an event like the one simulated in the national exercise.

National Nuclear Fuel Cycle Summit scheduled Oct. 14-17

The Carlsbad Department of Development's (CDOD) second annual National Nuclear Fuel Cycle Summit is scheduled for Oct. 14-17 in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The summit's emphasis will be on the fuel cycle and will address WIPP's over 14 years of safe, compliant and efficient operations and the community support that contributes to WIPP's success.

"The focus of this year's summit is going to be how policy can be balanced with science," said John Waters, CDOD executive director.

The 2012 summit attracted experts worldwide who were welcomed by New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez. The CDOD is enthusiastic about prospects for attendance at this year's event. "This national summit will provide people from across the nation with a comprehensive look at the history of the nuclear industry from weapons production to commercial nuclear power," said Waters. "This conference will be especially helpful to elected state and federal legislators and their staff

from across the country."

Topics include the evolution of policies, lessons learned, viewpoints from regulators, the DOE, industry leaders, and discussion on the nation's path forward. "For those struggling for answers on how to balance politics and science in dealing with nuclear issues, this a conference you do not want to miss," said CDOD President Dave Sepich.

Information on the conference is available at:

www.NuclearFuelCycleSummit.org



The U.S. Department of Energy

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

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