

WIPP Quick Facts (As of 6-15-10)

8,643

Shipments received since opening
(8,272 CH and 371 RH)

68,296

Cubic meters of waste disposed
(68,109 CH and 187 RH)

133,440

Containers disposed in the
underground
(133,073 CH and 367 RH)

WTS maintains VPP Star status



WIPP's stars are still aligned perfectly.

Following an on-site visit and audit of WIPP safety programs, a four-member team from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Health, Safety and Security (HSS) recommended that URS Washington TRU Solutions (WTS) retain its Star level status in the DOE's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP). WTS manages and operates WIPP for the DOE.

WIPP was the first DOE site in the complex to receive VPP Star status in 1994 and it has continued at that level ever since. The VPP program promotes safety and health excellence through cooperative efforts among labor, management and government at DOE contractor sites. Star status is the highest level that can be achieved and is reserved for companies that demonstrate outstanding protection of employee safety and health. Among other factors, a company must show continual improvement to receive this status.

"We've seen a tremendous amount of improvement," Brad Davy of the DOE HSS said. "From what we've seen and heard from most workers, there has been a significant improvement this year in the relations between labor and management. We've also seen greater manager and supervisor presence in the workplace. Congratulations on a job well done."

"I hope we can continue to build on what we started," said Ricky Fuentes, vice president of the United Steelworkers Local 12-947. "We're all on the same team. At the end of the day, we all want to reach that number one goal, which is safety excellence."

Welcome home troops!



WIPP employees were among those who turned out for a welcome home parade through downtown Carlsbad, N.M. to honor members of the 920th Engineers Company of the New Mexico National Guard. The National Guard company returned from a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.

Migratory birds return



Migratory birds are returning from a winter long absence. Remember that these birds and their nests are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Once nesting has begun and eggs are in the nest, the habitats cannot be removed or destroyed. The birds must be allowed access to their nests to care for their eggs and young.

WIPP Mine Rescue Teams compete



File Photo

WIPP was represented well at the recent regional mine rescue competition in Newberia, La. Although the Blue Mine Rescue Team was the only WIPP team to make the trip to La., they made sure to bring plenty of hardware back to home with them.

The competition, sponsored by the Southern Regional Mine Association, was judged by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and consisted of four different categories: the field competition, the team technician competition, the team trainer contest and a first aid competition.

The WIPP Blue team placed in three of the four categories. The team finished first in the team trainer and first aid contests and placed second in the field competition. In the end, the Blue Team also walked away with "Best Overall" honors.

Just a few weeks later, the WIPP Silver Team made a trip to Maysville, Ky for the Southeast Kentucky Regional Mine Rescue competition.

The Silver Team had good showings in the four categories as well, finishing first in the field competition and second in both the team technician and team trainer contests.



The WIPP Silver Team competed in the Kentucky Regional Mine Rescue Competition. The team members are, (l to r), Mat Ridgeway, Mark Long Jr., Hank Miller, Chauncey Ortega, Fabian Carrasco, Curtis Sanders III, Kirk Nance and Doug Pitzer.

Team leader Buddy Webb said he was proud of how the teams performed.

"Competing in mine rescue competitions validates our training and demonstrates to the mining industry our commitment to excellence," he said. "The WIPP teams performed exceptionally well once again and congratulations for a fine effort!"

Gadbury receives EM award



CBFO Manager Dave Moody, left, presents Casey Gadbury with a special achievement award from Environmental Management for his work on the Recovery Act Project.

A Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) director has received national recognition for his efforts in planning and executing projects related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Casey Gadbury, the Director of the National TRU Program, has also served as CBFO's ARRA Federal Project Director.

Gadbury, along with other DOE employees, was recognized at the 12th EM Recognition Ceremony held in the Forrestal Auditorium in Washington D.C. Dr. Ines Triay, DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management, presented the awards.

"While I was not able to attend this ceremony, I'm certainly honored to receive this award on behalf of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and its employees," Gadbury said. "The Recovery Act team here in Carlsbad has worked hard to ensure the public that WIPP's ARRA plan is transparent, fully integrated, well planned and well executed."

The award recognizes Gadbury as a key member of CBFO for "exceptional achievement and significant contribution" to ARRA project planning. Because he was unable to attend the Washington D.C. ceremony, he was presented with his award by Dr. Dave Moody, CBFO manager, at a ceremony later held in Carlsbad.

"Through ARRA, we've been able to move forward with cleanup activities around the country, and we've also created or saved more than 500 jobs," Gadbury said. "I applaud everyone involved with continuing to make such exceptional progress. This award is one measure of the progress made."

National Bike-to-Work Day



Several WIPP employees rode their bikes to work in support of National Bike-to-Work Day last month. Above, Robbie Morrison (left) and Happy Scheel prepare for their bike ride home.

CBFO manager stresses importance of education

Education opens doors.

That was the message Dr. Dave Moody, manager of the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO), delivered to graduating seniors during Loving High School's commencement program May 17 in Loving.

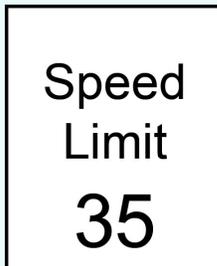
Moody encouraged the students to pursue their dreams, be it a college education or a trade, and he also suggested that they consider where their path will lead them in 10 and 20 years.

"You make the choices that determine your future," he said. "I know you have the support network, and I know you can achieve."



CBFO manager Dave Moody was the keynote speaker at the Loving High School graduation ceremony. Loving is a small community approximately 15 miles southeast of Carlsbad, N.M.

South Access Road
speed limit is 35 mph



The speed limit on the South Access Road has been reduced to 35 mph for all traffic. Maintenance work is being done on the road and it is important to pay attention to the signs. Watch for workers and be prepared to stop if necessary.

A DARK Matter of Fact

Scientists are now using the WIPP underground to try to solve the universe's major missing mass problem.

The mission of the DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant is to permanently dispose of transuranic (TRU) radioactive waste left from the research and production of nuclear weapons in salt beds 26 miles east of Carlsbad.

But the repository, 2,150 feet underground, has a benefit that makes the location ideal for many science experiments – the nearly half mile overburden of salt and other rock shields the repository from most cosmic rays and naturally occurring radiation.

The Enriched Xenon Observatory (EXO), a particle physics experiment that is searching for neutrinoless double beta decay, recently assembled its detector in the WIPP underground and is slated to begin its experiment this summer.

A different experiment, led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), seeks to observe the presence of a yet-unknown substance called "dark matter" in the WIPP underground. Physicists are searching for the presence of particles that may have mass but do not interact with other matter.

MIT's Dr. Peter Fisher is leading an experiment in the WIPP underground seeking to shed some light on this dark matter. The experiment seeks to find weakly interacting massive particles, or WIMPs, which pass through most other matter. The experiment's laboratory at WIPP, a blue Conex portable storage unit, is being assembled above ground at the site. Fisher said that electrical equipment was installed in early March.

"At some point after that, when there's a hole in the schedule, the Conex will be unbolted in the middle and the two parts will go down underground on the waste hoist," Fisher said.

The dark matter experiment will be set up in the northern end of the WIPP underground, adjacent to the EXO project and a New Mexico State University biology experiment designed to examine the effects of different levels of background radiation on bacteria.

Fisher said the idea for the WIPP experiment was first put together in 2004, "but we didn't do anything scientifically important (related to the project) until about a year and a half ago," he said.

During his time as a researcher, Fisher has conducted experiments in a number of different mines, so he knew what he was looking for when seeking the right underground location.

"One of the main reasons we choose WIPP is because of the strong safety culture there," he said. "I feel comfortable sending my college students there to conduct research. It also helps that it's a DOE facility."

The dark matter experiment especially needs to avoid exposure to radon, which doesn't exist in WIPP's underground.

"WIPP is just a really good place for us," Fisher said.

WIPP employees take part in nuclear symposium

More than 100 high school students now know a lot more about the science involved with WIPP, thanks to a special symposium held in Hobbs, N.M.

Members of the local chapter of the American Nuclear Society sponsored the event at Hobbs High School. Most of the students who attended the event are enrolled in advanced placement classes.



Candice Jierree speaks to high school students at the American Nuclear Society event in Hobbs, N.M. Jierree works in Radiological Control and Dosimetry at WIPP.

"We successfully had this nuclear symposium at Carlsbad High School every year since 2006," said Jef Lucchini, a chemist with Los Alamos National Laboratory- Carlsbad Office (LANL-CO) who spoke at the event. "It's nice to see that it's now expanding to other high schools in Southeastern New Mexico. This region has a great potential for nuclear science and technologies."

Employees of WIPP and the National Enrichment Facility near Eunice both spoke at the event.

"The students wanted information concerning fields of study and possible professions related to nuclear energy, radioactive waste disposal and uranium enrichment," said Washington TRU Solutions (WTS) employee Candice Jierree. "It was a pleasure to interact with the students and teachers and to tell them about WIPP."

Jierree's presentation was titled "Eleven Safe Operating years at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant."

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

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