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 @WIPPNews

WIPP UPDATE: March 24, 2014

Preparations for Underground Re-entry Continue

DOE has approved the “WIPP Habitability” safety document that covers the underground ventilation system. This document establishes the controls necessary to ensure the WIPP ventilation system is working properly. An additional safety document, which puts in place the controls needed to make sure personnel are safe while in the underground, should be finalized soon. Both packages must be in place before personnel can re-enter the mine.

This week, workers will inspect the hoist ropes for the Salt and Air Intake conveyances that will lower personnel to the underground facility.

Parking Area Unit Wastes to be Unloaded in Waste Handling Building

Plans are underway to move a number of waste packages from WIPP’s Parking Area Unit into the Waste Handling Bay for venting—a requirement of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. “Venting” involves removing the waste from the transportation packages to allow the dissipation of any hydrogen buildup, a process that poses no risk to the public or environment. The waste payloads will be removed from the shipping packages and stored in the Waste Handling Building in accordance with the WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit, which allows for 60-day storage in the Waste Handling Building. The New Mexico Environment Department approved an additional 45-day extension to store wastes in the Waste Handling Building.

HEPA Filter Aerosol Testing Continues

Aerosol testing on WIPP’s high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters to evaluate their efficiency began March 23. Los Alamos National Laboratory personnel who are conducting the tests determined a larger generator was needed to inject the aerosolized oil into the filters. The generator is expected to arrive late today and tests are scheduled to resume March 25.

Key Step Completed for Workforce Return to WIPP Site

Personnel are one step closer to returning to work at the WIPP site. A continuous air monitor (CAM) has been installed at Station B where filtered air is exhausted. The CAM will be connected to the Central Monitoring System to provide immediate notification to the Central Monitoring Room should airborne contamination be detected at Station B. The CAM is operational and will be evaluated to ensure that it does not interfere with other critical systems.

Personnel have been working at alternate locations in Carlsbad and will return to WIPP in a phased approach once all safety actions have been completed.

Community Meetings Scheduled

March 25 – WIPP update to City of Eunice at 5:30 p.m. on WIPP recovery activities and temporary storage of Los Alamos wastes at Waste Control Specialists. Location: Eunice Community Center, 12th Street and Avenue I.

March 25 - WIPP update to the Artesia City Council at 7:00 p.m. on WIPP recovery activities. Location: 511 W. Texas Ave., Artesia

March 27 - Carlsbad Mayor Dale Janway and DOE co-host a meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meetings will be held every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. at the Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. The meeting will also be streamed live at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>.