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$1M to Fund Underground Science at WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., July 1, 2004 – With $1 million in funds from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Washington TRU Solutions (WTS) will begin preparing space underground at DOE's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) for science research.

WTS, the management and operating contractor for DOE at WIPP, plans to accelerate the hiring of five additional miners to refurbish underground rooms and alcoves once used by Sandia National Laboratories for experiments, and upgrade an area now used by Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to support particle physics research. Research activities, located far from the waste disposal area, do not impact the WIPP project's primary mission.

In 2001, DOE proposed expanding the availability of the WIPP facility and infrastructure to scientific research. The $1 million funds were provided by Congress for fiscal year 2004 to continue and expand university science programs at the facility.

The depth of the WIPP repository and its location in thick salt deposits make it ideal for experiments that require extremely low background radiation measurements. Shielded from surface cosmic rays and naturally occurring radioactive by-products such as radon, the nearly one-half mile deep repository offers researchers a unique environment for conducting experiments in particle physics, cosmology and other frontier sciences.

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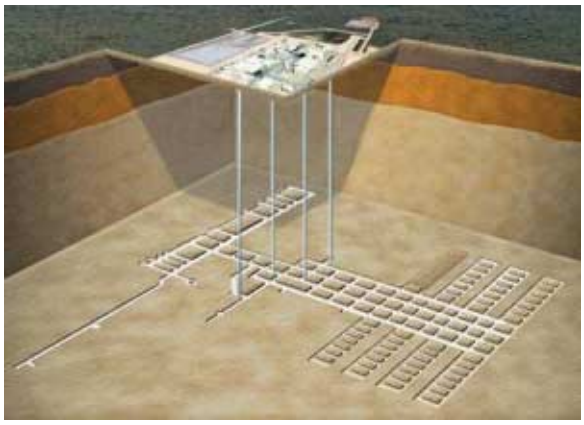
Funds have been used in the past for neutrino detection research conducted at WIPP by a group lead by Los Alamos National Laboratory. This year's funding will allow the lab and its partners to initiate new experiments in neutrino-less double beta decay – a rare nuclear process that occurs when a disintegrating nucleus emits two electrons.

A Stanford University team also plans to use WIPP's underground facilities to conduct advanced experiments in subatomic particle research. While mining crews prepare an unused underground research area for the observatory, the team is constructing clean room modules at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Complex for shipment to WIPP.

The new funds allow WTS to hire personnel sooner than originally planned to assist with the experimental area remodeling. Following a job announcement at the New Mexico Department of Labor, interviews have already been conducted for the open mining positions.



WIPP is the nation’s solution for cleaning up defense-generated transuranic waste located at DOE sites across the country. Operational since March 1999, WIPP has received over 2,700 waste shipments, safely disposing more than 21,000 cubic meters of transuranic waste in the repository located nearly one-half mile underground.

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