

DOENews

Operations Personnel Responding to Radiological Event at WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., February 16, 2014, 6:32 p.m. (MST) – Operations personnel are responding to a radiological event at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

NEW INFORMATION

- The Joint Information Center has been deactivated. Future media inquiries may be made through the WIPP Information Center at 1-800-336-WIPP (9477); please leave contact information and your call will be returned as soon as possible
- Officials at WIPP continue to monitor the situation
- Access to the site continues to be limited to essential personnel only
- No surface contamination has been found on any equipment, personnel or facilities
- DOE emphasizes there is no danger to human health or the environment
- WIPP's system of air monitors and protective filtration system continue to function as designed.
- The source of the airborne radiation is still being investigated

Previously Released on 2/15/14 at 9:17 p.m.

- At 11:30 PM Friday, a continuous air monitor detected airborne radiation in the underground.

- Multiple perimeter monitors at the WIPP boundary have confirmed there is no danger to human health or the environment. No contamination has been found on any equipment, personnel, or facilities.
- Any possible release is minimized by the highly protective filtration system that is designed to filter any air leaving the WIPP repository.
- WIPP's ventilation system automatically switched to Filtration Mode when airborne radiation was detected underground.
- As a precautionary measure, employees on the surface were instructed to shelter in place.
- At 5:00 PM MST, a determination was made to allow non-essential employees to leave the site.
- These employees were cleared by radiological control technicians prior to departure. All non-essential employees were off-site by 5:30 PM MST.

Previously Released on 2/15/14 at 2:49 p.m.

- At 11:30 PM Friday, a continuous air monitor detected airborne radiation in the underground
- WIPP officials are on site to assess the situation and determine next steps
- There were no employees working underground at the time and employees on the surface have been sheltered in place as a precaution
- No personnel contamination has been identified

WIPP, a cornerstone of DOE's cleanup effort, is the nation's first repository for the permanent disposal of defense-generated transuranic radioactive waste left from research and production of nuclear weapons.

Located in southeastern New Mexico, 26 miles east of Carlsbad, WIPP's facilities include disposal rooms excavated in an ancient, stable salt formation, 2,150 feet (almost one-half mile) underground. Waste disposal began at WIPP on March 26, 1999.

For more information about WIPP, call 1-800-336-9477, or visit the WIPP Web site at <http://www.wipp.energy.gov>.