



Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
P. O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221
April 18, 2014

Eddy and Lea Country Residents:

This has been an eventful week for our employees and recovery efforts at the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

This week, when workers entered the mine, they traveled farther than any previous WIPP recovery re-entry. Based on the continuous air monitor alarm location, and with the information gathered during Wednesday's entry, we believe the event likely occurred in the waste disposal area's Panel 7.

As workers traveled toward the waste disposal area, they did not detect airborne contamination. This confirms our ventilation system is working as designed. Once the location and cause of the event are identified, we can focus on any necessary cleanup activities in the area and work towards returning WIPP to full waste disposal operations.

We are also working with top experts in the industry to develop immediate and long-term plans. This week, leaders from the Department of Energy and Nuclear Waste Partnership met to discuss details of the draft WIPP Recovery Plan. While we know the plan will change as we learn more from future entries, we want a plan that guides us beyond initial recovery actions and paves the way for us to begin accepting and disposing waste again.

As one of our emergency management improvement measures, I have joined the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) roster, and this week, we participated in an emergency scenario walk-through. We reviewed the responsibilities, needs, and procedures for each position. Our commitment is to continually improve operations and training, while ensuring the safety of workers, the public, and the environment.

We are also in the process of gathering the final bioassay samples from employees. To ensure the most accurate reporting, we asked the expert medical radiological consultants at the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site to review our process, and they agreed with our sampling practices.

We will continue to provide the latest information through our daily website updates and weekly town hall meetings at the Carlsbad City Hall. Next week, our town hall will be on Wednesday due to previously scheduled city and DOE events.

Sincerely,

//Signature on File//

Jose R. Franco, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office

cc:
CBFO M&RC