



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

June 5, 2014

Eddy and Lea County Residents:

We continue our investigation into what caused the February 14 radiation release at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), with the Accident Investigation Board working on site. This process is likely to continue for some time, but I will keep you informed as we near the conclusion.

As I noted in my previous letter, we have identified the damaged drum believed to be a contributing source of the radiological release. On May 31, an entry team was able to safely and successfully collect six samples from a variety of locations in Panel 7 of Room 7, including from the breached drum and a nearby standard waste box. These sample results are consistent with the contamination previously identified. We have posted pictures of the sampling work on our website, wipp.energy.gov.

Meanwhile, we continue to work with officials at Los Alamos and Waste Control Specialists in Texas, where similar drums are temporarily stored, to ensure they are stored and handled safely. Additional protective measures are being taken at both locations, including monitoring for gas build-up and increases in temperature.

Recovery efforts also continue to progress at the WIPP. This week, we began a phased process to replace the many filters used at the WIPP to prevent any future releases to the environment. Over the weekend, workers completed ventilation system re-alignment to reduce airflow in the WIPP underground facility to accommodate isolation of one of the two filter units in preparation for filter replacement. During filter replacement, a single exhaust fan will operate to ensure only filtered air reaches the environment. This week, crews are staging required equipment to support the filter change, and personnel from the Savannah River Site and the WIPP will complete mock-up exercises and drills. Actual replacement of the filters will begin next week and take several weeks to complete.

This Thursday also marks a change in our town hall schedule. These meetings will now be held the first and third Thursday of each month, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., at the Carlsbad City Hall. We will continue to keep you informed as we learn more about the cause of the release, and the recovery process moves forward.

Sincerely,

//Signature on File//

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

cc:
CBFO M&RC