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Tuesday, April 11, 2000 **Colo. WIPP Shipments May Double**

The number of radioactive waste shipments traveling to New Mexico from the former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons factory in Colorado is expected to at least double in coming months.

The weekly trips of trucks carrying waste on Interstate 25 from Rocky Flats near Golden, Colo., soon could increase from two to four a week, said Donovan Mager, a spokesman for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant outside Carlsbad.

"It's going to be a definite ramping-up process," Mager said.

He said he could not predict how many shipments would come from former weapons factories in Idaho and Washington.

But if the size of shipments remains the same, it will take more than 11,000 shipments from the three former weapons plants to move the material to the WIPP site.

The WIPP facility first took waste from Rocky Flats in June. Shipments resumed last month after New Mexico claimed that shipments improperly contained chemical waste as well as radioactive material.

Rocky Flats has resolved the problem and is again sending drums of contaminated tools, glassware, equipment and protective clothing to be buried 2,150 feet under the desert.

Plutonium triggers for bombs were made at Rocky Flats until 1989. Plant operations were officially halted in 1992.

Opponents of the shipments have said the shipments are dangerous.

But officials said there have been no serious problems, and truckloads have been scheduled to avoid rush hours in Denver and Colorado Springs.

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