



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

*Will
WIPP*

June 14, 2000

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NM ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Peter Maggiore, Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department
1190 St. Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Secretary Maggiore:

Enclosed as requested by your office is a copy of the Media Advisory issued June 7, 2000 by the USDOE Richland Operations Office regarding the proposed first transuranic waste shipment from Hanford to the WIPP.

The advisory was intended by Richland to provide advance notice to regional press about a scheduled media tour today of the Hanford Waste Receiving and Processing Facility (WRAP) and the proposed events associated with the tentative first shipment of waste on June 19. Unfortunately, we at CAO were not aware that they planned to issue the advisory on June 7, and we did not have an opportunity to review it prior to release to ensure that it was clearly stated that June 19 was a tentative shipping date pending NMED approval.

I apologize to you and your staff for any inconvenience or appearance of any "pressure" on your department on our part due to the lack of clarity on a "tentative" rather than firm shipping date. I will work harder in the future to avoid any recurrence of this type oversight.

Sincerely,

Dennis S. Hurtt
Director, Office of Public Affairs

Enclosure

cc: Inés Triay, CAO

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MEDIA ADVISORY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
RICHLAND OPERATIONS OFFICE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Colleen C. Clark (509) 373-5985
Erik Olds (509) 372-8656

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 7, 2000

First-Ever Departure of Radioactive Waste for Off-Site Disposal Set for June 19
Reporters Invited to Capture Historic Moment

A major milestone for Hanford and the region will occur June 19, with the first-ever shipment of radioactive waste off the Hanford Site for permanent disposal. The first of an estimated 2,500 shipments of transuranic waste will be transported to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, New Mexico for safe, permanent disposal in the underground repository. Hanford's transuranic waste consists of items that were contaminated during plutonium production and environmental cleanup, such as tools, gloves, clothing, equipment, and debris.

Hanford will be the fourth site to ship to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) WIPP facility, which opened in March 1999. Hanford's final certification from the state of New Mexico is expected soon.

Reporters and photographers will have two opportunities to conduct interviews and capture video or photos to cover this story:

Wednesday, June 14:

Four parts of Hanford's Waste Receiving and Processing Facility (WRAP), where the waste for the first shipment is being packaged and loaded into special shipping containers. Program experts will be available to talk about the preparations for shipping, transportation safety considerations, and the last-minute work being done to get ready for June 19th. This represents the best opportunity for shooting video and photographs of the packaging/loading process, and may be very useful material for television reporters planning to cover the first shipment.

Please confirm your attendance by calling (509) 372-8656 no later than Tuesday, June 13th.

Transportation will leave from the Richland Federal Building (825 Jadwin Avenue, Richland, WA). **Please arrive by 8:30 a.m. and bring photo identification for badging.**

-More-

Monday, June 19:

Be there as the first truck departs the Hanford Site en route to WIPP. A ceremony to mark the occasion will bring together representatives from the states of Washington and Oregon, area Tribal governments, and local community leaders. Speakers will include U.S. Congressman Doc Hastings, Washington State Department of Ecology Deputy Director Dan Silver, and Oregon Department of Energy Assistant Director Mike Grainey, along with DOE-Richland Operations Office Manager Keith Klein and Fluor Hanford, Inc. President Ron Hanson. Individual interviews may be available after the ceremony.

You'll also have an opportunity to witness the final safety checks conducted by the states of Washington and Oregon, and talk with the drivers of the truck. Representatives from WIPP in Carlsbad, New Mexico will be on hand to answer questions about the shipping route and what happens to the waste once it gets to New Mexico.

Please confirm your attendance by calling (509) 373-5985 no later than Thursday, June 15.

Transportation will leave from the Richland Federal Building (825 Jadwin Avenue, Richland, WA). **Please arrive by 8:45 a.m. and bring photo identification for badging.** The ceremony will begin at the WRAP facility promptly at 10:00 a.m., and reporters can expect to be returned to the Federal Building no later than 12:30 p.m.

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Historical Note: The U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office manages the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State. Hanford was established during World War II as part of the top secret Manhattan Project to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. Weapons material production was halted in the late 1980s. The Hanford Site is now engaged in the world's largest cleanup effort to deal with the legacy of radioactive and hazardous wastes that resulted from the plutonium production era. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology regulate Hanford's cleanup program under a long-term compliance contract called the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement sets the framework and timelines on the cleanup work so that Hanford meets environmental standards. Hanford cleanup is focused on three outcomes: restoring the Columbia River Corridor for other uses, transitioning the Central Plateau to long term waste treatment and storage, and putting Hanford resources to work for future opportunities.