



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax (505) 827-2836

 **ENTERED**



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

DERRITH WATCHMAN-MOORE
DEPUTY SECRETARY

August 19, 2004
Immediate Release

Contact: Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Dir.
Phone: (505) 827-0314

Environment Secretary Ron Curry Mandates State Approval Before Idaho Waste Shipments to WIPP May Resume

(Santa Fe, NM) — New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry has required that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) receive state approval before waste shipments from the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad resume. A verbal agreement to this request came from R. Paul Detwiler, DOE’s Acting Manager of the WIPP facility.

“Until the state is satisfied that all the proper actions have been taken to investigate and correct the recent waste analysis failure at INEEL, we cannot allow more waste to be shipped,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “There has been a serious breakdown in a vital DOE process here and the state needs time to verify that this has been corrected before shipments resume.”

NMED recently learned that shipments of radioactive waste from INEEL to WIPP between March and July this year violated state and federal requirements. These requirements are in place to ensure that all waste shipped to WIPP can be disposed of safely.

These shipments of mixed waste from INEEL’s Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility contained up to 108 drums that had not undergone the proper testing to ensure that they were eligible and safe for WIPP disposal.

“This error has seriously eroded our trust level with DOE,” said Secretary Curry. “Therefore, the state needs to perform its full due diligence, including making enforcement decisions surrounding this DOE oversight.”

NMED staff are currently at INEEL investigating this incident. Information from this investigation will be used in any possible further enforcement action.

“NMED will not approve any INEEL waste shipments until our investigation is completed,” said Secretary Curry. “I expect NMED’s investigation to be completed in approximately two weeks.”

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

###

