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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460



MAY 19 2005

Dr. Inés Triay, Acting Manager
Carlsbad Field Office
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, NM 88221

Dear Dr. Triay:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted an inspection of the waste emplacement processes and procedures at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) from May 17 - 19, 2005. EPA inspectors found that the necessary waste emplacement procedures are in place, and that DOE staff are adequately trained for waste emplacement. EPA inspectors observed that the WIPP Waste Information System (WWIS) adequately tracks the amount of cellulose, plastic and rubber (CPR), and magnesium oxide (MgO) in the repository. In addition, the WWIS is also able to calculate the MgO safety factor to ensure that it remains at least 1.67.

EPA has no findings or concerns related to this inspection. A final inspection report will be sent to you and placed in the EPA docket in the near future.

The result of this inspection fulfills the conditions outlined in our letter dated February 3, 2005 (Docket Number: A-98-49, Item II-B3-79). In that letter we stated that DOE could not emplace super-compacted waste in WIPP until EPA inspected and approved the completed MgO emplacement plan, applicable procedures, and tracking system.

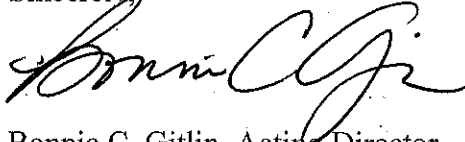
In a separate letter dated May 12, 2005, EPA approved the waste characterization activities for debris waste at Idaho National Laboratory's (INL) Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project (AMWTP) (Docket Number: A-98-49, Item II-A4-53). DOE has now met all EPA requirements for the characterization, emplacement and disposal of super-compacted waste from INL AMWTP at WIPP. As a result of these two inspections, EPA is now approving the emplacement of super-compacted waste from the INL AMWTP.

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If you have any questions regarding this inspection, please contact Tom Peake at 202-343-9765.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie C. Gitlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Bonnie C. Gitlin, Acting Director
Radiation Protection Division

cc: Frank Marcinowski, DOE/HQ
Russ Patterson, DOE/CBFO
Steve Casey, DOE CBFO
Steve Zappe, NMED
EPA WIPP Team
EPA Docket