



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY



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10,000th Shipment Celebrated at WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., October 24, 2011 – Approximately 130 people gathered at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) on October 22, to celebrate the 10,000th shipment of transuranic (TRU) waste to WIPP, which arrived safely late last month.

The event was attended by elected and appointed officials, state and local leaders, WIPP employees and representatives of the carriers who transport TRU waste to WIPP.

"People in D.C. absolutely understand the service you provide the nation," said U.S. Congressman Steve Pearce. "We need to solve political problems in this industry because modern economies depend on good fuel and good energy. Everything hinges on what you do here," he said.

Speaking to the strong community support for WIPP and other nuclear projects located in Southeast New Mexico, Pearce said he welcomed the nation to use the vast space and salt beds of the area for other nuclear solutions.

David Huizenga, Acting Assistant Secretary for the DOE Office of Environmental Management, said WIPP had exceeded all expectations. He thanked the State of New Mexico, DOE Carlsbad Field Office, URS Washington TRU Solutions, employees at the generator sites and local community leaders for their dedicated support.

"Thank you all for your efforts," he said. "You are true national heroes."

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New Mexico Environment Department Secretary David Martin read a letter of congratulations from Governor Susana Martinez, who recognized the important role WIPP plays in cleanup of New Mexico's legacy TRU wastes.

Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper also sent a letter of appreciation for the 2005 cleanup of Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site near Golden, Colo., a major site where TRU waste was stored for decades until WIPP opened. The site is now a wildlife refuge.

Since opening in 1999, WIPP has established an impressive record. In addition to 10,000 safe shipments, WIPP drivers have logged more than 12 million safe loaded miles—equivalent to 25 roundtrips to the moon without a serious accident or injury—to clean up 21 TRU waste sites around the nation.

WIPP is a DOE facility designed to safely isolate defense-related TRU waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP, which began waste disposal operations in 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.