



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY



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WIPP Receives Top Safety Award

CARLSBAD, N.M., November 9, 2011 – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) received top accolades from New Mexico's leading mining organizations. The New Mexico Bureau of Mine Safety (BMS) recently recognized URS Washington TRU Solutions (WTS), LLC, the WIPP management and operating contractor, for receiving the New Mexico Mining Association (NMMA) and New Mexico BMS Safe Operator of the Year Award.

"I'm pleased to congratulate Washington TRU Solutions and the WIPP workforce for receiving the state's top mine safety award for 23 of the past 25 years," said Ed Ziemianski, Carlsbad Field Office Interim Manager. "It's also significant that 10 individual WTS work groups are also being recognized for zero injuries. Safety is the cornerstone for everything we do at WIPP, so these awards are further indicators of the exceptional safety culture that exists here."

The minimum criterion for the award includes a frequency rate, or injury rate, below the national average and no fatalities for the period between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2011. As reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2010 national mining average Total Recordable Case injury rate was 3.1. The WTS average for Fiscal Year 2011 was 0.14, which is 95 percent below the national average.

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“The safety culture at WIPP is second to none,” said Chris Hefner, New Mexico BMS associate state mine inspector, at an event recognizing employees on November 2, 2011. “Not only do you have one of the safest mines in the nation, you have gone out of your way to share best practices with other mines. I applaud you for your efforts.”

WTS groups recognized for a zero injury rate included Hoisting Operations, Mine Maintenance, Mining Operations, Underground Services, Instrumentation and Control Maintenance, Facility Restoration Maintenance, Facility Operations, Contact-Handled Waste Handlers, Remote-Handled Waste Handlers, and Radiological Control.

“WIPP’s contribution to the mining safety in New Mexico is highly valued by mine safety professionals across the state,” said NMMA Safety Committee Chairman Randy Logsdon. “WIPP’s outstanding example and safety record lend additional credibility to mine safety initiatives throughout New Mexico.”

WIPP is a DOE facility designed to safely isolate defense-related transuranic 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, New Mexico.

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