

Allen, Pam, NMENV



From: Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV
Sent: Wednesday, August 13, 2014 9:38 AM
To: Allen, Pam, NMENV
Subject: FW: April 10, 2014 Issue: Personnel Re-enter the WIPP Underground

April

From: 2150 - Employee Information
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2014 8:14 AM
Subject: April 10, 2014 Issue: Personnel Re-enter the WIPP Underground



April 10, 2014



Questions and Answers

Brought to you by the WIPP Employee Health Advocates

Q: Will swirling winds cause Plutonium or Americium to be "kicked up" from the ground?

A: Swirling winds can cause re-suspension of TRU contamination; however, ground deposition surveys in and around the WIPP facility have not indicated any elevated TRU levels in the soil. As such, high winds will not cause any radioactivity to be re-suspended in air and spread. Over 250 surveys and 1200 air samples inside the facility boundary have been performed since the release with no detection of TRU contamination.

Q: A question was asked how CMR personnel working the midnight shift 2/14/14-2/15/14 could receive positive fecal samples?

A: Some of the TRU contamination released passed over the Support Building allowing some of the material to be directed into the CMR intake ventilation. Coupled with the fact that the concentration of the release was very low, contamination can be detected in bioassay analysis and not detected with surveys performed by Radcon. The reason that contamination was not detected on any air intake system, the ground, roof tops, etc. is due to the fact that the concentration was very low and the detection capabilities varies significantly between site survey instruments and laboratory instruments used for bioassay analysis.

For example, RadCon count room instruments and field survey instruments are capable of detecting 20 dpm/100 cm² removable TRU contamination and 500 dpm/100cm² total TRU contamination as required by regulations. In contrast, urine and fecal samples require highly sensitive laboratory instruments that can



Personnel Re-enter the WIPP Underground



Above: Workers discuss plans prior to entering the underground

The month of April has been an eventful one for WIPP. For the first time since a continuous air monitor (CAM) alarmed during the night shift of February 14, WIPP workers returned to the underground. The re-entry into the mine came after careful planning and practicing took place. A structured approach was taken to ensure all the necessary steps to protect the employees were identified and completed prior to re-entering the mine. As a precautionary measure, all employees were suited in anti-contamination gear and equipped with powered air-breathing units.

On April 2, Recovery Teams entered the mine -- surveyed conditions from the Salt Shaft Station to the Air Intake Shaft establishing two usable exit locations. They set up an underground base of operations and also established communications with the Central Monitoring Room using a mine pager and land-line phone. Additional CAMs were installed at various locations down W-30 from the Salt Shaft Station to S-700.

On April 4, Recovery Teams again entered the mine, this time working their way to S-1600. There, workers established a second base of operations. This entry was important to the third phase of the re-entry process identifying the location of the event. Similar to the previous entry, teams set up CAMs along the way and tested communication and safety equipment.

During these entries, teams surveying the area found no radiological contamination. This was not surprising as the design of the WIPP ventilation system pulls air toward the exhaust shaft and not in fresh air

detect less than 0.1 dpm/liter of urine and less than 0.1 dpm per fecal sample, so given the proximity of the CMR to the release point, the data is not unexpected to be seen in bioassay, but not with typical RadCon instrumentation.

Q: What was the discussion over DL vs MDC for bioassay results?

A: Although the WIPP Laboratory has a very good process for analyzing urine and fecal samples, it was determined that the more conservative action level required by regulations was not be used to determine if urine or fecal samples contained TRU material. The Minimum Detectable Concentration (MDC) was initially used and is typically about twice the value of the Decision Level (DL), which is a statistical value to prevent missing a positive sample. Samples from employees were recounted using the DL. As a result, four employees who had been told their samples were negative, showed levels slightly above DL. The process of using the DL ensured that no positive results were missed.

NWP Employee Receives Recognition



Above: Rad Control Technician Jonathan Gonzalez receives recognition from Bob McQuinn

Johnathan Gonzalez recently received recognition from NWP President and Project Manager, Bob McQuinn during a site POD meeting. Jonathan was instrumental in developing the Station B iCAM procedure.

drifts.

Final preparations for the third phase are in process and entry is expected in the near future.



Blankenhorn Leads WIPP Recovery Efforts

Additionally, he was recognized for his support of the Mine Re-entry mock-up team.



Above: Employees discuss upcoming plans during the morning POD

Waste Control Specialists Receives TRU Waste Shipments



Above: Transuranic waste shipments from Los Alamos National Laboratory arrive at Waste Control Specialists.

On April 2, Waste Control Specialists (WCS) received its first shipment of transuranic waste from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The LANL shipments to WCS are for temporary storage while we work to get WIPP operational once again.

These shipments are especially important to LANL and to the State of New Mexico as they are part of the framework agreement to remove 3,706 cubic meters of transuranic waste currently stored above ground at the Lab. All shipments to WCS will be made in accordance with the current WIPP shipping requirements, using WIPP shipping packages, trucks, trailers and highly skilled personnel.

WCS, located in Andrews County, TX, is a commercial treatment, storage and disposal facility licensed and permitted for radioactive



Above: Jim Blankenhorn (left) speaks to employees during the All Hands Meeting on Monday.

It seemed inevitable that Jim Blankenhorn would eventually come to WIPP since a good part of his professional experience has involved transuranic waste management.

Jim was introduced to employees Monday as the new NWP Recovery Manager. The Georgia native has almost 30 years of experience in the nuclear industry. He most recently served as the Chief Operating Officer for Perma-Fix Environmental Services.

Then he got the call from NWP President and Project Manager Bob McQuinn.

"I worked with Bob at Los Alamos National Laboratory to recover two of the TRU waste programs there," said Jim. "He called me about three weeks ago and said he needed my help. Knowing what was going on and the critical nature of the WIPP project, I couldn't sit on the sidelines. The recovery of WIPP and its importance to the TRU program and the nation are of vital importance.

Prior to joining Perma-Fix, Jim served as Deputy Project Manager for West Valley Environmental Services. He provided leadership and direction for facility cleanup, deactivation and decommissioning of the facilities at West Valley, New York, a former fuel reprocessing facility.

During his time with Bob at Los Alamos, from 2008-2010, Jim served as the Program Director for the TRU Waste Disposition Project. This is the same project that, today, certifies and packages legacy TRU waste for disposal at WIPP. Jim also spent more than 17 years at the Savannah River Site, undertaking positions requiring increasing levels of responsibility.

Jim's career began in the Army in 1986 when he was commissioned as a Nuclear Biological Chemical Officer. In 1990 he left active duty and joined the Army Reserve where he currently holds the rank of Colonel, Third Brigade Commander, Gulf Division, in Birmingham, Alabama.

"Jim is the right person for the job," said Bob McQuinn. "He doesn't talk as much as me. In fact, he is quiet and steady. Nothing gets him down and I'm sure, when you get to know him, you will understand why he

waste management.

WIPP's Popularity on Twitter Continues to Grow

On March 6, 2014 at 1:15PM, WIPP sent out its first "Tweet" announcing that we would be holding a Town Hall Meeting that day at 5:30pm. Initially, only a handful of media and government representatives followed the account.

One month later, the WIPP account has over 250 followers including major media outlets, state and local representatives, and worldwide organizations. If you have a Twitter account and would like to follow WIPP, the official account is DOE WIPP, username @WIPPNEWS.


Policy on Personal Electronic Property at the Skeen-Whitlock Building

As a reminder, personally owned USB data storage devices, such as thumb drives, flash drives or portable hard drives are not allowed on WIPP facilities.

Requests to bring digital music players, iPods, electronic media readers and handheld PDA devices on WIPP facilities must be submitted to the Information System Security Officer for review and approval. These devices must not be connected to WIPP computers or communication equipment.

Personal electronic devices must be approved and a Personally Owned Electronic Sticker must be affixed to the device(s) before entering the secure area in the building. Cellular phones are allowable on WIPP facilities without requests for permission, provided that they are not connected to WIPP computers or communication equipment.

Contact
2150

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was selected to lead the recovery effort."

WIPPTREX Andrews is a Success



A full-scale WIPPTREX was recently held in Andrews County at the Andrews County Expo Arena. WIPPTREX are training exercises designed to allow local and regional first responders the opportunity to test and refine their skills in a controlled environment. The Andrews County WIPPTREX simulated an accident involving a WIPP shipment, a pickup carrying radiological material, a van full of high school students and a transport truck carrying crude oil. While the actual location of the exercise was in the parking lot, the first responders were told it occurred on the New Mexico/Texas border. Due to the location, it would have required a multi-state; multi-jurisdictional response. The scenario was designed to be realistic as possible, including individuals acting as injured victims and the parking lot looking like an actual accident scene.

The exercise started with a 911 call to report the accident and law enforcement personnel were the first to arrive on-scene. The Andrews Fire Department responded and made the request for additional resources. First responders had to assess the scene and respond accordingly based on the conditions. Paramedics transported multiple victims to Permian Regional Medical Center, where hospital staff also had to respond according to their procedures. The exercise gave numerous agencies the opportunity to test and analyze their response procedures and identify opportunities to improve.

Safety and Wellness Tip: Don't Avoid Preventative Medical Tests

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality posted the following notice on a billboard reminding men to receive regular medical screening tests. A witty man, eagerly posted his reply on the billboard.



A URS-led partnership with BSW and AREVA



Although the above image is humorous, the reality is that many men and women do not take time to visit their doctors and receive life saving health screenings. Regular health exams and tests can help find problems before they start. They also can help find problems early, when your chances for treatment and cure are better.

By getting the right health services, screenings, and treatments, you are taking steps that help your chances for living a longer, healthier life.