



U.S. Department of Energy
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 @WIPPNews

WIPP UPDATE: October 3, 2014

Progress continues in restoring WIPP underground

More than half of the WIPP underground has now been surveyed and determined to be free of radiological contamination and additional progress was made this week to roll back additional zones into the Radiological Buffer Areas (RBA). Employees can enter the RBA without radiological Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

Radiological control technicians are entering the WIPP underground almost daily to complete contamination surveys and mapping of the WIPP underground. Once all surveys are completed, workers will move forward with plans to address the contaminated areas. Most contamination will be fixed in place using a variety of techniques. Fixing the contamination in place, using a water spray or other fixative, will prevent radioactive particles from becoming re-suspended or airborne, where they could present an inhalation or ingestion hazard for personnel working in those areas. Some areas that exhibit high contamination levels, like Panel 7 Room 7, will not be decontaminated. These areas will be controlled until they are isolated and workers entering these areas will be required to wear the appropriate PPE, including respiratory protection.

Maintenance personnel are about 80 percent complete with preventative maintenance activities so underground equipment can be restarted in support of ground support activities, like installing rock bolts in the roof and walls to maintain the stability of the underground facilities.

WIPP Recovery Plan briefed to stakeholders

The Department of Energy (DOE) released the WIPP Recovery Plan on Tuesday and spent the rest of the week briefing congressional leaders, national news media, regulators and stakeholders on the plan details. Mark Whitney, Acting Assistant Secretary for the DOE Office of Environmental Management (EM), began the briefings on Tuesday with meetings on the Hill with the New Mexico congressional delegation. Additional calls were made to the New Mexico governor's office and the New Mexico Environment Department. Whitney ended the day Tuesday by holding a national press call to answer questions about the plan.



On Thursday, Frank Marcinowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Waste Management at EM, and Joe Franco, DOE Carlsbad Field Office Manager, participated in a Town Hall meeting co-hosted by the City of Carlsbad and DOE. For a video replay of the Town Hall meeting, go to <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/events/3450473>. Additional briefings with stakeholder groups are planned in the coming weeks. The WIPP Recovery Plan is available on WIPP Recovery Website at wipp.energy.gov.

Community meeting scheduled

October 16 – The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host its Town Hall meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The next meeting is scheduled Thursday at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street.