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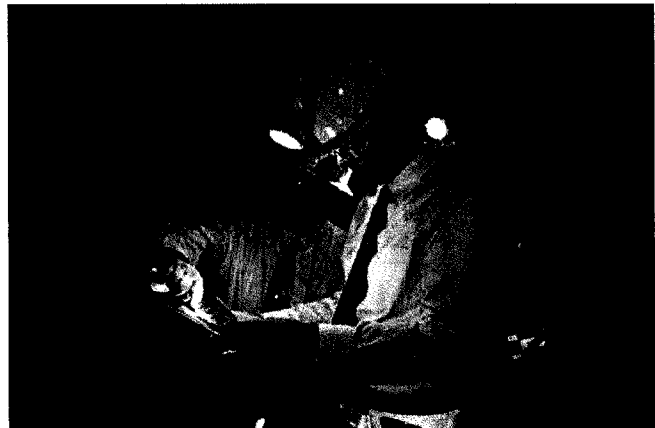
Head of EM Visits Waste Isolation Pilot Plant for First Underground Tour Since February Incidents

Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Mark Whitney visited WIPP on Thursday and became the first non-WIPP employee to tour the underground facility since a truck fire and unrelated radiological release temporarily closed the facility in February.

"EM, and the greater DOE, is committed to reopening WIPP to support the important mission of cleaning up the nation's legacy of nuclear waste," Whitney said. "DOE's highest priority is the safety, health and protection of the public, the workers, the community, and the environment.

"We believe today's tour of the underground facility represents a significant benchmark for progress toward resumption of normal activities at the facility," Franco said. CBFO has responsibility for WIPP and the National Transuranic Program.

Following regular radiological release surveys, over half of the mine is now classified as a "radiological buffer area," indicating workers can access the area without donning personal protective clothing or respirators. Workers are cleaning and performing preventive maintenance on equipment in the underground facility and on the surface affected by the fire event.



CBFO Manager Joe Franco, left, points to a location on a map of the WIPP underground as EM Acting Assistant Secretary Mark Whitney looks on.

Replay of October 16 Town Hall available

A replay of the October 16 WIPP Town Hall meeting, sponsored by the City of Carlsbad and DOE, is available at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>. The next Town Hall meeting is scheduled for November 20th at the Carlsbad City Hall.

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