



U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
P.O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

Media Contact:

Tim Runyon
WIPP Recovery Communications
(575) 234-7545

www.wipp.energy.gov

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WIPP UPDATE: November 6, 2014

WIPP reports air-monitoring results following fan restart

Laboratory results from air samplers located on and around the WIPP facility following the restart of the 860A fan on October 21 ([see October 23 WIPP Update](#)) showed minimal levels of radioactive contamination detected at two of the on-site air sampling locations. The levels were well below that which would impact worker health or the environment.

The 860A fan, which is part of the underground ventilation and filtration system, ran for approximately two months following the radiological incident before being taken off-line for maintenance. Since that time, the 860B or the 860C fans have been operating to continue the air filtration process. WIPP radiological control staff anticipated that a small amount of residual contamination could be present in the adjacent ductwork and the interior workings of the 860A fan because it was operational immediately following the radiological release.

Slightly elevated levels of airborne contamination were identified at the air sampler located at the end of the exhaust duct, where filtered air exits the WIPP underground facility and at a second sampler located approximately 60 yards northwest of the fan. The results for the remaining sample locations were either below the minimum detectable concentration or within the range normally observed at the site.

Independent air particulate samples collected by the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring Research Center (CEMRC) also identified low levels of contamination at their on-site and near field monitoring locations. CEMRC results confirmed that airborne contamination levels resulting from the restart of the fan were very low.

As a precautionary measure, employees on-site sheltered in place prior to and 30 minutes following the startup – meaning they stayed inside buildings and were not allowed to exit those building until it was determined to be safe. It is important to note that, while airborne contamination was detected on the WIPP site, levels were low and well below levels that would impact worker health or the environment. At no time were employees, the public or the environment at risk. WIPP will continue to monitor the air samplers to ensure that no additional changes are detected. The safety of employees, the public and the environment remains WIPP's highest priority.

November 6 – The City of Carlsbad and DOE will co-host its Town Hall meeting featuring updates on WIPP recovery activities. The meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 5:30 p.m. Location: Carlsbad City Council Chambers, 101 N. Halagueno Street. Live streaming of the meeting can be seen at <http://new.livestream.com/rrv/>.

