



**From:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 23, 2016 9:27 AM  
**To:** Allen, Pam, NMENV  
**Subject:** FW: VOC update

**From:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 09, 2016 9:34 AM  
**To:** Roberts, Kathryn, NMENV; Kieling, John, NMENV; LucasKamat, Susan, NMENV  
**Cc:** Smith, Coleman, NMENV; Teeter, William, NMENV; Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Subject:** RE: VOC update

VOC Update 3/9/2016

WIPP folks called at 9:00am today and provided the following update to the underground VOC issues at WIPP.

After further evaluation by DOE and NWP a decision was made yesterday to restrict ALL access into the underground starting today.

No personnel will be allowed into the underground until at least next week.

DOE wants to take a closer look at the programs, procedures and equipment that are in place.

DOE will be checking the equipment (including the M6 hand held, multi gas, air monitors) for calibration and operating set points to ensure they are proper and consistent.

After the DOE evaluation, a decision will be made whether to lift or extend the restrictions next week or what other actions need to take place.

At this time there are no impacts to those Permit required inspections that have been able to be performed in the UG thus far.

If any inspections are subsequently missed, they will be reported in the facility operating record and the now quarterly reports.

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**From:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Sent:** Friday, March 04, 2016 3:22 PM  
**To:** Roberts, Kathryn, NMENV; Kieling, John, NMENV; LucasKamat, Susan, NMENV  
**Cc:** Smith, Coleman, NMENV; Teeter, William, NMENV; Briley, Siona, NMENV; Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Subject:** RE: VOC update

UPDATE 3/4/2016

VOCs: Rick and Anthony called at 11:30am today.

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WIPP folks believe that what led to the latest high VOC readings near Panel 5 was that work was being done in draft W-170 near the Panel and they needed to turn equipment around. They used the Panel 5 access drift to turn around and these areas have “dead air” where VOCs usually build up. It is suspected that as the equipment were being turned around in the drift it disturbed this dead air and forced stagnant VOCs into the ventilation flow and this higher VOC concentration is what led to the high readings downstream.

It is important to note that workers in this area have been using organic cartridge respirators ppe. A lessons learned or critique report will be produced as a result of these Safety Pauses. The conclusion will help adjust procedures as necessary. The report will not likely be made available to the public. This is more for internal use. One lesson that would probably come out is not to use these dead air access drifts to turn equipment around.

At this time it is believed that the northern SDI area, ventilation was not increased for a long enough period to fully rid the area of accumulating VOCs for the diesel equipment. Rick said that since the final critique report has not been completed yet, he did not have the final information.

### Fire Water Pump issues

There are two main pumps at the base of the water storage tanks that provide 1,500 gallons per minute of water. 1 of the 2 pumps is not working (went down earlier this week).

Workers have evaluated the situation and have determined that the pump may need to be replaced which will mean this pump will be down for a prolonged period of time (no time estimate was available at this time).

Rick and Anthony said that right now with the 1 working pump, the facility still has water at “adequate volume and pressure” and at “1,500 gallons per minute” as required in Permit Part 2 below. They wanted to make NMED aware of the situation incase questions were directed to us from the public or others. They will be keeping NMED apprised of the water pump issue.

### WIPP Permit Part 2, Section 2.10.1.4. Water for Fire Control

The Permittees shall have water at adequate volume and pressure to supply water-hose streams, foam-producing equipment, automatic sprinklers, or water-spray systems, as required by 20.4.1.500 NMAC (incorporating 40 CFR §264.32(d)). The WIPP facility water system shall consist of water furnished by the City of Carlsbad capable of providing water at a rate of 6,000 gallons per minute; two water storage tanks, one 180,000-gallon capacity tank for use by the fire-water system and a second tank with a 100,000-gallon reserve; dedicated fire-water pumps rated at 1,500 gallons per minute at 125 pounds per square inch; and a wet-pipe sprinkler system connected to surface buildings as described in Permit Attachment D (RCRA Contingency Plan).

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**From:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 03, 2016 11:52 AM  
**To:** Roberts, Kathryn, NMENV; Kieling, John, NMENV; LucasKamat, Susan, NMENV  
**Cc:** Smith, Coleman, NMENV; Teeter, William, NMENV; Briley, Siona, NMENV; Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Subject:** VOC update

UPDATE 03/03/2016

Rick Chavez and Stuart Jones called at 10:30am today.

The Safety Pause is still in effect in the norther SDI and southern part of the WIPP underground. These same areas continue to be restricted to workers. The current expectation is that the Safety Pause will be lifted by this Sunday or early next week.

WIPP folks initially wanted to brief NMED on Permit required inspections that would potentially be missed in the affected areas because of the stand down.

After looking into things further they mentioned this morning that no required inspections have been missed thus far or were expected to be missed if the stand down was lifted soon.

WIPP will be keeping NMED updated as to when the stand down is lifted and/or if Permit required inspections are missed.

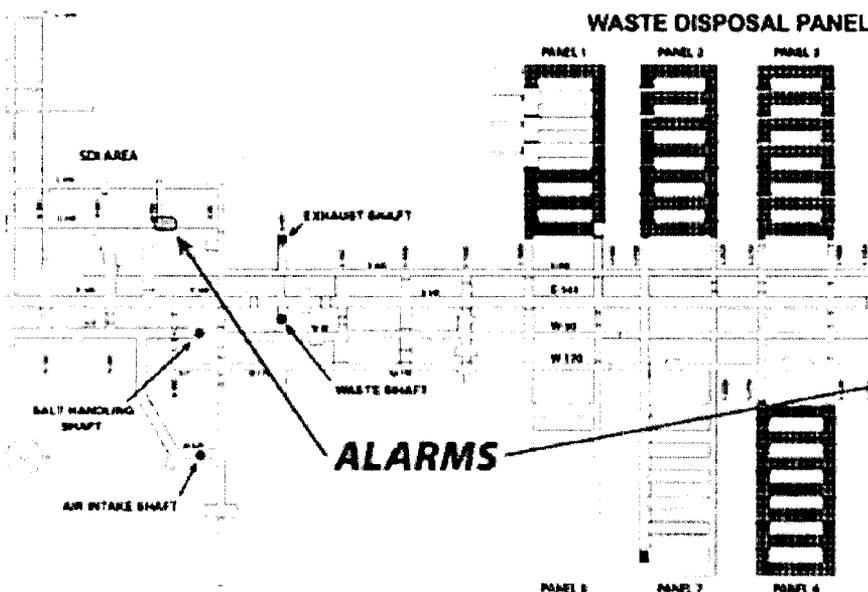
WIPP currently reports the status of Permit required inspection in the Admin Order reports they submit and are also required to log this information in the facility record.

If I get any other information I'll be sure to pass along.

Rick mentioned that there were a couple of reports on this in the Carlsbad newspaper the Current Argus.

Argus stories :

- Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> - <http://www.currentargus.com/story/news/local/2016/02/23/wipp-stop-works-deal-poor-air-quality/80800600/>
- Feb 26<sup>th</sup> - <http://www.currentargus.com/story/news/special-reports/wipp/2016/02/26/work-wipp-continues-after-safety-pause/80997098/>



**From:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Sent:** Friday, February 26, 2016 3:59 PM  
**To:** Roberts, Kathryn, NMENV; Kieling, John, NMENV; LucasKamat, Susan, NMENV  
**Cc:** Smith, Coleman, NMENV; Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Subject:** FW: News from WIPP

UPDATE:

Elevated VOC levels in the WIPP underground.

WIPP folks notified me on Monday afternoon, 2/22, that workers had again discovered elevated VOCs in the WIPP underground and that they would let me know more details as soon as they were available. Concerns with elevated VOCs in the WIPP underground were also communicated last Friday, see email below.

This afternoon I received additional information for the Monday, 2/22, event.

WIPP operations initiated a Safety Pause on Monday after again discovering elevated VOCs, likely NO<sub>2</sub> and CO, near the Salt Disposal Investigation (SDI) in the northern part of the underground and this time also just outside the entrance to Panel 5 at the very south end of the underground. Workers use hand held air quality monitors to check the air of an area before workers are allowed in.

The Safety Pause remains in place. Access has been restricted and barricades have been set up around the SDI area and just south of Panels 3 and 7 (S-2520 in the W-170, W-30 and E-140 drifts).

It is believed that the elevated VOCs continue to be the result of the restricted mine ventilation and the combustion products of the diesel bolters.

More information on this may be available next week.  
I will keep you posted.

Thank you.

Ricardo

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**From:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV  
**Sent:** Friday, February 19, 2016 11:58 AM  
**To:** Roberts, Kathryn, NMENV; Kieling, John, NMENV; Smith, Coleman, NMENV  
**Cc:** Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV ([Ricardo.Maestas@state.nm.us](mailto:Ricardo.Maestas@state.nm.us))  
**Subject:** News from WIPP

Hello all,

Rick and Anthony from WIPP gave me a call around 11am . They called to give us a heads up on a couple of issues.

On February 17, 2016 WIPP personnel discovered elevated reading for CO and NO<sub>2</sub> in the underground near the Salt Disposal Investigation, or SDI, Area at the north end.

The Central Monitoring Room was notified, workers were moved away from the area, barricades were put in place to keep workers away and ventilation was increased to that area for about three hours.

After three hours levels were checked again and were found to be normal. Workers were allowed to return.

The current thought is that there was not enough ventilation going through the area and the higher levels were the result of by-products of bolting activity in the vicinity.

On February 3, 2016 underground workers returned to the site of the small roof fall that had occurred in January 2015 in the north access drift to Panel 3 at S-2750 to check the conditions (attached is the February 9, 2015 Notice to NMED

regarding the January 2015 discovery). This areas has been off limits since November 2014. Workers discovered that additional salt from the “back” or roof had come down. Rick mentioned that the new roof fall is very similar in size to the last one but gave no dimensions. The January 2015 discovery was 6’ wide by 6’ long by 18” thick .

Rick stated that they have evaluated the Permit requirements for notifications and mentioned that they have decided no additional action is required at this time. They feel that since this new roof fall is in the exact area of the last one, the February 9, 2015 Notice “of a trend towards unstable conditions” suffices. The area will continue to be monitored and access will continue to be restricted.

Note that that attached notification is from the January 2015 discovery. Cole and I will review this last report and Permit requirements and decide if a new notification is necessary for this new roof fall discovery.

Let me know if you have any questions on the above information.  
Thank you.

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