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**ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

ENTERED



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**FACT SHEET**  
**FEBRUARY 22, 2018**

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPROVE A CLASS 3 MODIFICATION  
TO CHANGE THE PANEL CLOSURE DESIGN AT THE  
WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT (WIPP)  
CARLSBAD, NEW MEXICO**

**Facility Name:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

**EPA Identification Number:** NM4890139088-TSDF

**GENERAL BACKGROUND**

The New Mexico Environment Department (“**NMED**”) intends to issue a modification to the Hazardous Waste Facility Permit (“**Permit**”) for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (“**WIPP**”, or “**the WIPP facility**”) to manage, store, and dispose hazardous waste, and to close hazardous waste disposal units, in accordance with the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Act (“**HWA**”) and its implementing regulations. NMED is charged with issuing a permit that will ensure that WIPP’s hazardous waste operations are managed in a manner protective of human health and the environment. Prior to issuing a permit, NMED is required by regulation to release a draft of the revisions to the permit for public comment. NMED is also required to issue a fact sheet which serves two functions: 1) to facilitate public review of that draft permit; and 2) to provide a brief summary of the basis for draft permit conditions.

WIPP is a facility authorized by Congress for the disposal of transuranic (“**TRU**”) radioactive waste materials generated by atomic energy defense activities of the United States. The Department of Energy (“**DOE**”) owns the WIPP facility and DOE and Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC (“**NWP**”) co-operate the WIPP facility. These entities are collectively referred to as “**the Permittees**” in the draft Permit and this fact sheet.

The Permittees received a Permit from NMED in 1999 to dispose of TRU mixed waste containers 2,150 feet below ground in a mined geologic repository within the Salado Formation. This Permit was renewed in 2010. The WIPP facility is permitted to accept hazardous waste that is managed by DOE as contact-handled (“**CH**”) TRU mixed waste (transuranic mixed waste with a surface dose rate not greater than 200 millirem per hour). The WIPP facility is also permitted to accept hazardous waste that is managed by DOE as remote-handled (“**RH**”) TRU mixed waste (transuranic mixed waste with a surface dose rate of 200 millirem or greater). The containers of waste must undergo complete waste characterization by the generator/storage sites in compliance with requirements of the Permit prior to disposal.

This fact sheet describes the general background for the draft Permit, including; a physical description of the WIPP facility, its hazardous waste activities, the draft Permit, how the public may be involved in the permitting process, and the technical and regulatory basis for permit requirements and conditions.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE WIPP FACILITY**

The WIPP facility is located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad, New Mexico in a remote desert area where there exists a 2,000-foot-thick salt bed. Openings have been mined 2,150 feet underground near the middle of the salt formation. WIPP is a geologic repository mined within a bedded salt formation, which is defined in 20.4.1.101 New Mexico Administrative Code (“**NMAC**”) (incorporating 40 CFR §260.10) as a miscellaneous unit. As such,

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Hazardous Waste Disposal Units (“HWDUs”) within the repository are eligible for permitting according to 20.4.1.900 NMAC (incorporating 40 CFR §270), and are regulated under 20.4.1.500 NMAC, (incorporating 40 CFR §264, Subpart X, Miscellaneous Units).

#### **TYPE AND QUANTITY OF WASTES WHICH ARE STORED AND DISPOSED**

Disposal at WIPP is limited to defense-generated TRU and TRU mixed wastes. Mixed TRU waste has a hazardous component and radioactive component of elements with atomic numbers greater than uranium (element 92). Generally, TRU mixed waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, residues, debris, soil and other items contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium, and hazardous components consisting of RCRA-listed heavy and toxic metals, RCRA-listed organic residues (non-liquid), and RCRA-listed inorganic and organometallic compounds.

EPA hazardous waste numbers with the prefixes, "U", "F", "P", and "D", identified at 20.4.1.200 NMAC (incorporating 40 CFR Part 261, Subparts C and D), apply to TRU mixed waste streams managed at the WIPP Facility. Specifically: (1) D codes denote the characteristics of ignitability (D001), corrosivity (D002), reactivity (D003), and toxicity (D004- D043); (2) F codes signify wastes from non-specific sources; and (3) P and U codes denote discarded commercial chemical products, off-specification species, container residues, and spill residues thereof, with the P codes signifying acutely hazardous wastes and the U codes signifying toxic wastes. Wastes with the characteristics of ignitability, corrosivity or reactivity (D001, D002, and D003) are explicitly prohibited from management, storage, or disposal at the WIPP facility. The existing Permit identifies the EPA hazardous waste numbers that are acceptable at the WIPP facility.

#### **PERMIT MODIFICATION SUMMARY AND BASIS FOR THE DRAFT PERMIT**

NMED’s issuance of the draft Permit is in response to the Permittees’ revised Permit modification request dated November 10, 2016. The foundation for the draft Permit is the current Permit as of December 2017.

The Permittees originally submitted a Class 3 permit modification request on March 20, 2013 that included *Panel Closure Redesign, Repository Reconfiguration with Panel 9a and Panel 10a, and Volatile Organic Compound (“VOC”) Monitoring Program Changes*. Public meetings were held in Santa Fe and Albuquerque on April 16 and 18, 2013. On July 29, 2013, NMED determined the application to be administratively complete and that it constituted a timely and complete application under the regulations. On September 20, 2013 NMED issued a Technical Incompleteness Determination (“TID”), requesting clarification and additional information. The Permittees provided a response on October 29, 2013. NMED reviewed the response and on February 14, 2014 issued a draft Permit for a 60-day public comment period. On March 21, 2014, NMED withdrew the draft Permit as a result of the ongoing investigations into the salt haul vehicle fire and drum breach that occurred at the WIPP facility in February 2014. No comments had been submitted at the time NMED withdrew the draft Permit. On July 22, 2015, NMED issued a second TID and requested that the Permittees update the modification request to reflect current conditions at the WIPP facility. The Permittees submitted their response to the second TID and also submitted a revised Class 3 Permit modification request on November 10, 2016. The revised Permit modification request did not include *Repository Reconfiguration and VOC Monitoring Program Changes*. The revised Permit modification did include *Modifications to the WIPP Panel Closure Plan*. NMED reviewed the revised request and issued a determination of Administrative Completeness on August 14, 2017, and a subsequent third TID on August 17, 2017 requesting clarification and additional information. On October 6, 2017, the Permittees submitted their response to the third TID. NMED is now issuing this draft Permit. The draft Permit is based on the revised modification request submitted on November 10, 2016, and the additional information requested by NMED.

The currently approved WIPP Panel Closure (“WPC”) consists of a 12-foot long concrete block explosion isolation wall and a 26-foot long concrete monolith. Explosion isolation walls have been constructed in Panels 1, 2, and 5, but no concrete monoliths have yet been constructed. The proposed WPC consists of up to two components: bulkheads, used by themselves to close Panels 1 through 9; and bulkheads and run-of-mine (“ROM”) salt used to close Panel 10. Closure Performance Standards are also being modified to reflect the modified Panel Closure. Changes proposed by the Permittees in their revised Permit modification and subsequent

typographical and editorial changes proposed in the Permittee responses to NMED, are indicated in the draft Permit as redline/strikeout with a white background. Permit Parts 1, 4, 6, 7, and Permit Attachments A2, A3, B, D, E, G, G1, G1-G, G1-H, H, N, and N1 will change as a result of this modification. Permit Attachment G1 is being replaced by a new Attachment G1. Permit Attachments G1-G, G1-H and N1 will no longer apply and will be removed. Permit Attachments G1-A and G1-B are new and will be added to the Permit. These portions of the Permit are the subject of the modification and are the only portions considered to be opened in this proceeding per 20.4.1.900 NMAC (incorporating 40 CFR §270.41). The draft Permit can be found on NMED's website located at the following link: <https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wipp/>.

#### **NMED PROPOSED ACTION IN DRAFT PERMIT**

NMED is issuing a draft Permit for public comment that considers the revised Permit modification submitted by the Permittees, along with subsequent typographical and editorial changes. NMED is proposing to approve the revised Permit modification, as submitted, ensuring compliance with the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Act, NMSA 1978, §§ 74-4-1 to -14 and the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Management Regulations, 20.4.1 NMAC.

#### **PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT PERMIT**

The Administrative Record for this proposed action consists of the Permit Modification Request, the draft Permit, this Public Notice, the Fact Sheet, and supporting documentation. The Administrative Record may be reviewed, with prior appointment, at the following locations during the public comment period:

NMED - Hazardous Waste Bureau  
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-6303  
Phone: (505) 476-6000  
*Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*  
Contact: Pam Allen

NMED- DOE Oversight Bureau  
406 N. Guadalupe, Suite C  
Carlsbad, NM 88220  
Phone: (575) 885-9023  
*Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*  
Contact: Makayla Viehweg

A copy of the draft Permit, this Public Notice, the Fact Sheet, the modification request and an index of the Administrative Record is also available on NMED's website located at the following link: <https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wipp/>. To obtain a copy of the Administrative Record or a portion thereof, please contact Ms. Pam Allen at (505) 476-6000 or at address given above. NMED will provide copies, or portions thereof, of the Administrative Record, including the draft Permit, at a cost to the requestor.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT AND REQUEST FOR HEARING**

NMED shall issue a public notice on **February 22, 2018**, to announce the beginning of a 60-day comment period in accordance with 20.4.1.901 A(3) NMAC that will end at **5:00 p.m. MST, April 23, 2018**. Any person who wishes to comment on the draft Permit or request a public hearing should submit written or electronic mail (e-mail) comment(s) with the commenter's name and mailing address to the address below. Only comments and/or requests received before **5:00 p.m. MST on April 23, 2018** will be considered.

Ricardo Maestas, WIPP Project Manager  
Hazardous Waste Bureau - New Mexico Environment Department  
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-6303  
Phone: (505) 476-6000  
Fax: (505) 476-6030  
E-mail: [ricardo.maestas@state.nm.us](mailto:ricardo.maestas@state.nm.us)

Ref: WIPP Draft Permit

Written comments should include, to the extent practicable, all referenced factual materials. Documents in the Administrative Record need not be re-submitted if expressly referenced by the commenter. Requests for a public hearing shall provide: (1) a clear and concise factual statement of the nature and scope of the interest of the person requesting the hearing; (2) the name and address of all persons whom the requestor represents; (3) a statement of any objections to the draft Permit, including specific references to any conditions being modified; and (4) a statement of the issues which the commenter proposes to raise for consideration at the hearing. Written comment and requests for public hearing must be filed with Mr. Ricardo Maestas on or before **5:00 p.m. MST, April 23, 2018**. NMED will provide a thirty (30) day notice of a public hearing, if scheduled.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR REACHING FINAL DECISION**

NMED must ensure that the final Permit is consistent with the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Management Regulations. All written comments submitted will be considered in formulating a final decision and may cause the draft Permit to be modified. NMED will respond in writing to all public comments. This response will specify which provisions, if any, of the draft Permit have been changed in the final decision and the reasons for the changes. All persons presenting written comments or who requested notification in writing will be notified of the decision by mail. These responses will also be posted on the NMED's website.

After consideration of all written public comments received and all data, views, and arguments presented at the public hearing, if one is held, NMED will issue, or modify and issue, the Permit. The Applicants shall be provided by mail a copy of any relevant modified documents and a detailed written statement of reasons for the modifications.

The Secretary of the Environment Department will make the final decision publicly available and shall notify the Applicants by certified mail. The Secretary's decision shall constitute a final agency decision and may be appealed as provided by the HWA (Chapter 74, Article 4 NMSA 1978).

#### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Any person having a disability and requiring assistance or auxiliary aid to participate in this process should contact Donna Wright no less than 10 days prior to the end of the public comment period at the following address: New Mexico Environment Department, P.O. Box 5469, 1190 St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87502-6110, (505) 827-9769. TDD or TDY users please access Ms. Wright's number via the New Mexico Relay Network at 1 (800) 659-8331.

#### **NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

NMED does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in the administration of its programs or activities, as required by applicable laws and regulations. NMED is responsible for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning non-discrimination requirements implemented by 40 C.F.R. Part 7, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. If you have any questions about this notice or any of NMED's nondiscrimination programs, policies or procedures, you may contact:

Kristine Pintado, Non-Discrimination Coordinator  
New Mexico Environment Department  
1190 St. Francis Dr., Suite N4050  
P.O. Box 5469  
Santa Fe, NM 87502  
(505) 827-2855  
[NMED.NDC@state.nm.us](mailto:NMED.NDC@state.nm.us)

If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a NMED program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator identified above or visit our website at <https://www.env.nm.gov/non-employee-discrimination-complaint-page/> to learn how and where to file a complaint of discrimination.