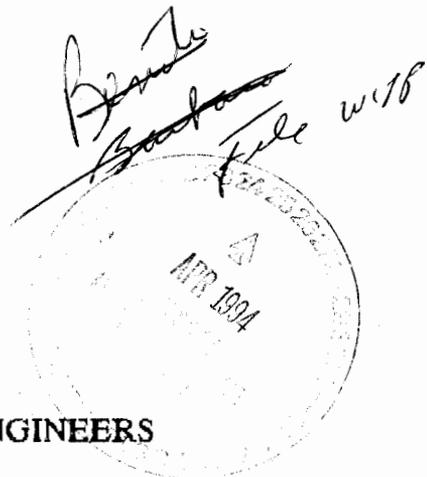


U. S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
CARLSBAD AREA OFFICE  
WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT  
P. O. BOX 3090  
CARLSBAD, NEW MEXICO 88221

# DOENNEWS:

ENTER



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ROOF FALL PREDICTION REVISED BY WIPP ENGINEERS

CARLSBAD, N. M., April 21, 1994 -- Engineers at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) have revised their prediction for a roof fall in an underground test room.

Officials first predicted that the test room roof would fall in early April. Continuous monitoring and careful evaluation of instruments located inside the barricaded room now indicate the fall will occur in May.

Subhash Sethi, manager of repository technology for the Westinghouse Electric Corporation's Waste Isolation Division (WID), said roof falls are expected and allowed to take place in a few unused portions of the underground to better understand rock salt behavior. Extensive ground control programs, including comprehensive state-of-the-art monitoring devices, ensure safe operating conditions in all areas that are in use.

The WIPP is a research and development facility operated by the U.S. DOE's Carlsbad Area Office, located 26 miles east of Carlsbad. It is designed to demonstrate the safe transport, handling and disposal of some defense-generated radioactive waste. Project facilities include excavated rooms 2,150 feet below the surface in ancient bedded salt rock.

-MORE-

940404



**Roof Fall Prediction Revised  
By WIPP Engineers**

-2-

During the 1983 construction phase of the WIPP, four Site Preliminary Design Validation (SPDV) rooms were mined for a variety of evaluation purposes, including the measurement of how fast the salt will close the mined space. Instruments in each room gauge how much the salt moves, or "creeps," each year. The predicted roof fall will be in SPDV Room 2, located in the opposite end of the underground from the area designated for waste disposal.

An earlier roof fall, which took place in SPDV Room 1 on February 4, 1991, was anticipated and allowed to occur "so engineers better understand the behavior of unsupported rooms," said Sethi. He further stated that the current prediction for the roof fall in SPDV Room 2 is based mainly on information obtained from the previous collapse of SPDV Room 1, and knowledge of rock behavior in the WIPP underground.

Engineers expect the SPDV Room 2 roof fall will further their understanding of salt creep and help them to predict future roof falls with greater accuracy.

-DOE-

<b>Contact:</b>	<b>Patty L. Baratti-Sallani</b>	<b>Jerran L. White, Manager</b>
	<b>Public Affairs Officer</b>	<b>Technical Communications and</b>
	<b>U.S. Department of Energy</b>	<b>Media Relations</b>
	<b>Carlsbad Area Office</b>	<b>Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division</b>
	<b>(505) 234-7313</b>	<b>(505) 234-8658</b>