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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WIPP EMPLOYEE SUSTAINS LEG INJURIES IN ACCIDENT

CARLSBAD, N.M., May 5, 1994 -- A Westinghouse Electric Corporation employee was injured Wednesday, May 4, 1994, at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) while participating in an informational vendor tour of the facility's underground operations area.

Kip Casper, Westinghouse Waste Isolation Division facility manager designee who investigated and reported the incident, said that Mark Friend, an employee in the division's purchasing department, suffered multiple fractures of his left leg at about 3 p.m. Wednesday in an accident.

Friend, who was treated by emergency personnel at the DOE site, was transported by a WIPP ambulance to Guadalupe Medical Center in Carlsbad where he underwent emergency surgery. A nurse in the hospital's intensive care unit reported today that Friend is in satisfactory condition.

A preliminary root cause analysis of the accident by Westinghouse safety and operations personnel indicates that Friend's knee was outside of an electric passenger cart operating in the WIPP underground. When the driver of the cart made a left turn, Friend's knee struck a guard rail causing breaks of his left femur and tibia.

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This type of accident is uncommon and isolated in nature, but an intensive investigation is being conducted. The in-depth inquiry will determine the cause of the incident, and if corrective actions are needed.

The National Safety Council has recognized the Waste Isolation Division for its outstanding safety programs many times, including the 1992 national "Award of Honor" for 3.2 million employee hours between October 1989 and March 1992 during which time there were no job-related injuries or illnesses requiring days away from work. In November 1993, employees completed another one million hours without a job-related injury or illness requiring days away from work.

A research and development facility, the WIPP is operated by the U.S. DOE's Carlsbad Area Office. 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 earth's surface in ancient bedded salt rock.

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