

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
 CARLSBAD AREA OFFICE
 WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT
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DOENEWS:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JOINT AUDIT CALLS FOR STAFFING REDUCTIONS AT THE WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., August 26, 1994 -- Attrition is expected to take care of a recommended 11 to 15 percent reduction in staffing for 1995 at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

The staffing recommendation is part of an audit report released this week by Office of the Inspector General. George Dials, manager of the DOE's Carlsbad Area Office, said the purpose of the audit, performed jointly by the DOE and the Inspector General, was to assure "we have an efficient, cost-effective program. I think we have accomplished that."

Any reductions for Westinghouse Electric Corporation, the DOE's primary contractor at the WIPP, will be carefully managed. No layoffs are expected, said Dials, and any reductions will be from the staffing level of 777, which was Westinghouse's employment level when the audit began. Westinghouse currently employs 743 employees. Annual attrition rates at the government facility average about 6 to 7 percent.

Dials added that the Carlsbad Area Office and DOE headquarters have worked closely and cooperatively with the Inspector General in conducting this review.

The staffing reduction, which must be completed by September 30, 1995, could mean an approximate savings in the 1995 WIPP budget of \$2 million to \$4 million. The Carlsbad Area Office has requested \$184.6 million to operate the WIPP and National Transuranic Program Office. This amount was recently reduced by \$6 million to \$178.5 million as a result of action taken by a congressional appropriations conference committee.

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**Joint Audit Calls For Staffing
Reductions At The WIPP**

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The Carlsbad Area Office expects any savings resulting from the proposed Westinghouse staffing cuts to help fund the newly formed National Transuranic Program Office, which coordinates all activities related to the characterization, storage, transportation and disposal of transuranic radioactive waste left from the production of nuclear weapons. Proposed staffing reductions at the WIPP are expected to be partially absorbed by increased activities within the National Transuranic Program.

The WIPP is a research and development facility operated by the Carlsbad Area Office. Located 26 miles east of Carlsbad, it is designed to demonstrate the safe permanent disposal of transuranic radioactive wastes from the nation's nuclear weapons production program.

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