

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

# DOENEWS:

*Barbara will file*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONGRESSMAN RICHARDSON RECEIVES UPDATE ON THE WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., August 29, 199--U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson visited with officials from the U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad Area Office today and received an update on activities at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

"I haven't been here since 1989, so this was a good opportunity to review the status of the WIPP and visit with the staff of the new Area Office," said Richardson, who was in town for a whirlwind update before heading to Albuquerque. "I want to be informed on activities here so that my constituents will also be informed."

Richardson said, "I am impressed with the new management team, organization, and the progress that's been made since the creation of the Carlsbad Area Office."

Representative Richardson, who serves on the Energy and Commerce Congressional Committee, asked many questions during his short visit. The lawmaker asked Carlsbad Area Office Manager George Dials if the WIPP might open sooner than 1998. Dials responded by saying "anything is possible, but we expect

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1998 is realistic because that's when the extensive regulatory compliance data is scheduled to be available for disposal."

The Congressman questioned interim staffing levels at the WIPP, leading to a 1998 disposal decision. Dials said current staffing is necessary to address all applicable regulatory and environmental issues before a disposal decision can be made.

In addition to discussing the WIPP and the National Transuranic Program Office, Dials expressed gratitude to Richardson for the lawmaker's support during the fiscal year 1995 budget process. "We are thankful for Congressman Richardson's continued support in Washington. We are also appreciative that he made time in of his busy schedule to receive an update on the Carlsbad Area Office's programs," said the DOE official.

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