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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DOE SECRETARY GRANTS WESTINGHOUSE 'STAR' STATUS, HONORS MINE RESCUE

CARLSBAD, N.M., October 3, 1994 -- Westinghouse Electric Corporation's Waste Isolation Division today received recognition from U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Hazel O'Leary for compiling one of the best safety records in the nation as contractor at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Secretary O'Leary, in town to receive an update at the DOE's Carlsbad Area Office, told reporters that Westinghouse's Waste Isolation Division is the first government contractor to receive "Star" status under the Department's Voluntary Protection Program (VPP).

The VPP is a national program established by the DOE in 1993 to recognize superior performance in the field of safety and health by contractor management and their employees. "Star" status is the highest level that can be achieved under VPP guidelines.

"Westinghouse has an impressive safety and health program at the WIPP," O'Leary said. "This is a work force that pulls together, a force of neighbors that rely on one another with clear plans to work safely while completing their goals. Safety awareness is more important than anything."

The VPP is voluntary and patterned after a similar program sponsored by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Each company that wishes to be considered submits an extensive application to the DOE for evaluation. Westinghouse applied for "Star" status earlier this year. DOE's site review was completed in late August.

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DOE Secretary Awards Westinghouse
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Carl Cox, general manager of the Waste Isolation Division, explained that environment, safety and health are part of the organizational culture at the WIPP. "The entire site is committed to the safety, protection and well being of its personnel, the public and the environment," he said. "Safety is woven into every operation. It will not be separated. Success cannot be achieved in any other way."

Since the company began operating the WIPP for the DOE in 1985, Westinghouse has been honored often for its positive approach in protecting employee safety and health. Awards and recognition include:

- Two recent awards of honor from the National Safety Council;
- A no-lost-time three million workhour record in 1992;
- A million safe workhours in 1993;
- The state of New Mexico Inspector of Mines "Operator of the Year" award for seven consecutive years;
- An incident rate of 1.59 (recordable accidents per 200,000 workhours) in 1992, less than one-fifth the national industry average;
- An incident rate of 0.72 in 1993, less than one-tenth the national industry average;
- Outstanding Mine Safety and Health Administration inspection results; and
- Inspector comments lauding the plant as a "model of safety."

In its August review of the WIPP site, the 15-person industry inspection team, made up of representatives from organizations such as OSHA, DOE and other government contractors, interviewed almost 100 Westinghouse employees, asking about their roles in environment, safety and health programs. Sanji Kanth, head of the DOE headquarters inspection team, and other individual members said they were impressed with employee responses.

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"An outstanding safety and health program like that of Westinghouse isn't possible without involvement from employees and management, top to bottom," said Pamela Evat, OSHA's representative on the VPP inspection team. "Westinghouse employees are aware of their role in maintaining safe working conditions; they are also aware of the benefits of such a program."

After applauding the company for its health and safety record, the Secretary recognized the national champion WIPP Blue Mine Rescue Team. During meetings at the Carlsbad Area Office, she also listened to concerns from stakeholders.

Westinghouse employs 740 people at the WIPP, a research and development facility operated by the DOE's Carlsbad Area Office. Located 26 miles east of Carlsbad, the WIPP is designed to demonstrate the safe, permanent disposal of transuranic radioactive waste left from the production of nuclear weapons. Project facilities include excavated rooms 2,150 feet below the earth's surface in ancient bedded salt rock.

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NOTE TO EDITORS -- Copies of the WIPP Mine Rescue Team press release are available by telephoning the following DOE/Westinghouse persons:

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