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(505) 234-8347**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****WIPP WASTE TRANSPORTATION CARRIER RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD**

CARLSBAD, N.M., March 7 -- The trucking company that will transport radioactive waste to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in 1998 has been named "Subcontractor of the Year" by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

CAST Transportation, Inc., a Denver, Colo., trucking company that subcontracts to Westinghouse Electric Corporation at the WIPP, received notification of the SBA's "Award of Excellence" last month.

Joe Epstein, general manager of Westinghouse Electric Corporation's Waste Isolation Division, the management and operating contractor for the DOE's Carlsbad Area Office, said the national award further illustrates the quality that is a standard at the WIPP.

"This is another step toward illustrating to stakeholders and the public our (DOE and Westinghouse) commitment to excellence and safety at the WIPP," said Epstein. "A lot is expected from the WIPP transportation carrier. CAST continues to meet and exceed our expectations."

Westinghouse nominated CAST for the award in December 1995. CAST, which received "superior" scores in all categories by an independent, non-SBA panel, was notified of the award in February 1996.

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**WIPP Waste Transportation Carrier
Receives National Award**

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The SBA award is largely based on CAST's performance as a subcontractor. Since its selection as the transportation subcontractor one year ago, the Colorado trucking company has completed 27 trips, logging more than 31,000 miles, without incident or accident. Activities include intrasite shipments for the DOE at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory near Idaho Falls, national public awareness events, and emergency response training exercises along designated transportation routes.

Audits of CAST's safety and quality assurance programs by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Colorado Highway Patrol, and the New Mexico Hazardous Materials Division resulted in the highest available ratings. Since 1976, CAST has transported a total of 19,000 loads of hazardous waste, covering five million miles over mountain terrain and substandard roads, without an accident.

CAST also distinguished itself by transitioning its subcontract with Westinghouse one month ahead of schedule, resulting in a net savings of almost \$60,000.

The WIPP, located 26 miles east of Carlsbad, is designed to demonstrate the safe, permanent disposal of transuranic radioactive waste left from the research and development of nuclear weapons. Project facilities include excavated rooms 2,150 feet below the earth's surface in a 225-million-year-old, 2,000-foot-thick salt formation.

When all applicable state and federal regulatory requirements are met, the Secretary of Energy will make a decision in October 1997 to open the WIPP as the nation's only underground nuclear waste repository. Shipments will begin arriving in April 1998 from more than 20 large and small temporary storage sites nationwide.

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