

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

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For Immediate Release

Newly Appointed DOE Official Lauds SENM Economic Development Projects

CARLSBAD, N.M., May 30 – Al Alm, making his first official field visit since being appointed assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE), Office of Environmental Management, arrived at the Carlsbad Area Office today to help break ground for a multimillion dollar training center that will serve southeastern New Mexico.

"I am following up on a commitment made by Secretary Hazel O'Leary in 1994," said Alm, in Carlsbad for a programmatic review of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and National Transuranic Waste programs. "This is a magnificent day for the Department of Energy and southeastern New Mexico. Partnerships like this are economically beneficial and productive for government and the citizens of this nation. The Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Training Center is a product of that partnership. It is a direct result of the longstanding cooperative efforts of the Department of Energy and the city of Carlsbad, with support from the U.S. Economic Development Agency, the state of New Mexico and New Mexico State University."

The training center will provide business development and worker training services, while creating a highly trained workforce that will attract and promote new business ventures. George Dials, manager of the Carlsbad Area Office, which administers the WIPP and National Transuranic programs, said the facility will allow area manufacturers easy access to state-of-the-art facilities and training programs supportive of the DOE's programmatic needs in waste management.

Specialized training and services will include industrial classes introducing new processes and technology; access to technologies at national laboratories

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including Sandia and Los Alamos; facility planning, equipment identification, engineering and support services; and management audits, policies procedures, personnel services and organizational structures. Lease space will also be available for start-up business development, business offices and laboratories conducting new product research and development.

"Not only will this facility provide valuable training, it will help transfer valuable technology to existing businesses, while expanding the area's tax base," said Dials. "More jobs will be created by businesses and individuals taking advantage of programs offered at the center."

Alm said the project is an integral part of the DOE's cultural change from isolation and self-sufficiency to one in which interdependence and technology transfer to the private sector have become the cultural norm.

"The DOE believes in contributing to communities from which it draws much of its support," said Alm. "This is but one of several economic initiatives designed to foster growth and economic prosperity for the region and technology leadership for the nation in the market areas of hazardous and nuclear waste management."

DOE's contributions to the Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Training Center include

- A cooperative agreement of \$2 million was provided to The Carlsbad Department of Development in January 1996 to support project operations.
- A grant of \$300,000 in fiscal year 1995 to define needs, work requirements, and deliverables.
- Surplus equipment estimated at more than \$250,000 identified for transfer to the center.

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When completed in January 1997, the center will offer 36,000 square feet of classroom space. In the interim, basic classes, which will lead to courses in advanced manufacturing, are being offered at New Mexico State University-Carlsbad.

Since 1993, the DOE has contributed or committed almost \$40 million in funding for economic development projects in southeastern New Mexico. Projects, other than the Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation Training Center, include \$33 million to operate the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center. The center, besides offering the region world-class laboratory capabilities, is the central collection point for scientists who are gathering environmental data in preparation for WIPP waste shipments.

An additional \$500,000 is provided for standardized training for WIPP and other DOE site workers participating in the National Transuranic Waste Program. Safety courses that aren't currently offered to regional companies are also funded under this program.

The WIPP is designed to permanently dispose of transuranic radioactive waste left from the research and production of nuclear weapons. Located in southeastern New Mexico, 26 miles east of Carlsbad, project facilities include disposal rooms excavated in an ancient, stable salt formation, 2,150 feet (almost half a mile) underground. Transuranic waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, and other disposable items contaminated with trace amounts of radioactive elements, mostly plutonium.

The National Transuranic Waste Program administers nationwide generation/storage site programs for storing, characterizing, packaging, transporting, and disposing of transuranic waste. Defense-generated transuranic waste is temporarily stored at more than 10 major generator/storage sites and several small quantity sites nationwide.

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