

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
CARLSBAD AREA OFFICE
WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT
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For Immediate Release
**DOE Awards Contract For Developing Prototype
Of HALFPACK Transportation Package**

CARLSBAD, N.M., October 1 -- The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Area Office today announced that the Engineered Products Department of the Westinghouse Government Technical Services Division, in Carlsbad, will make two prototypes of a transuranic waste transporter, called the HALFPACK.

The HALFPACK would reduce the number of transuranic waste shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) by about 2,000 and avoid millions of dollars in related transportation and repackaging costs over the life of the project.

The HALFPACK (see attached drawing) will be a shorter version of the Transuranic Package Transporter (TRUPACT-II). The HALFPACK will be designed to carry heavy drums of waste more efficiently. Because the HALFPACK weighs less than the TRUPACT-II, it can carry more weight in payload than TRUPACT-II. Three HALFPACKs will be able to transport 21 heavy drums on one truck; the TRUPACT-II can only ship 14 heavy drums per

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truck, decreasing the number of shipments and avoiding transportation costs of approximately \$20 million over the life of the project.

The prototype units will support WIPP engineers in determining the final design of the container. Upon completion, the final HALFPACK design will be submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for certification. Both the TRUPACT-II and HALFPACK are specifically designed to ship transuranic radioactive waste.

The transuranic waste generator and storage sites have placed about five thousand 55-gallon drums of waste in 85-gallon drums. This process is called "overpacking," and is done to drums that are in questionable condition. Currently, no certified package exists to transport 85-gallon overpack drums. The HALFPACK design can hold four 85-gallon drums, one seven-pack of heavy 55-gallon drums, or one standard waste box.

By accommodating the 85-gallon drums of waste with the HALFPACKs, workers avoid repackaging the contents of these larger drums for transport in the TRUPACT-II. By providing a shipping package for the 85-gallon overpack drums, the HALFPACKs avoid a repackaging cost of approximately \$22.5 million over the life of the project.

Avoiding repackaging also prevents exposing workers to additional radiation, which supports the "ALARA" concept -- a safety process to keep workers' radiation exposure "as

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low as reasonably achievable." ALARA is required by federal regulation at all nuclear facilities.

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.

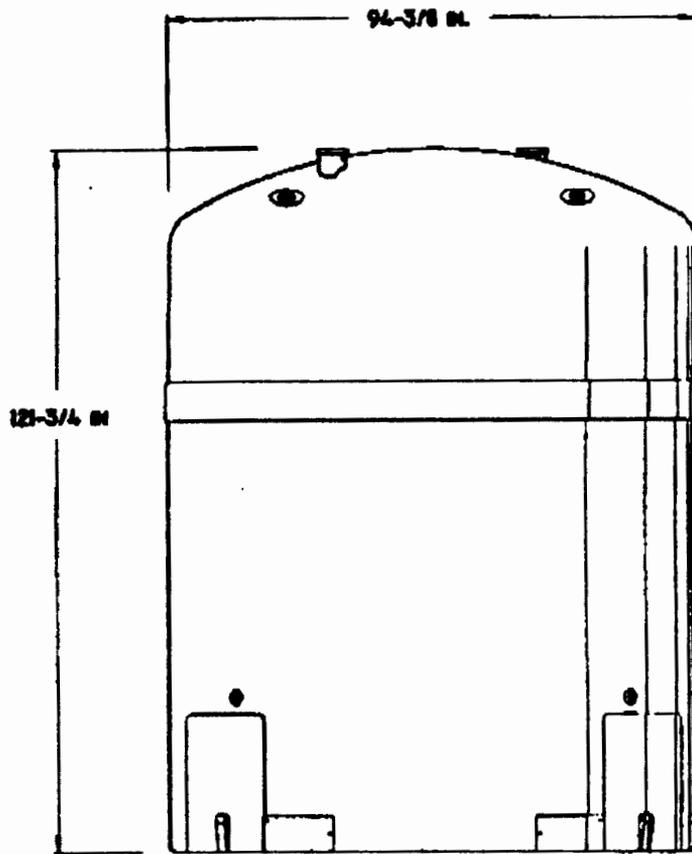
Transuranic waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, and other disposable items contaminated with trace amounts of radioactive elements, mostly plutonium.

WIPP is scheduled to open for waste receipt in November 1997.

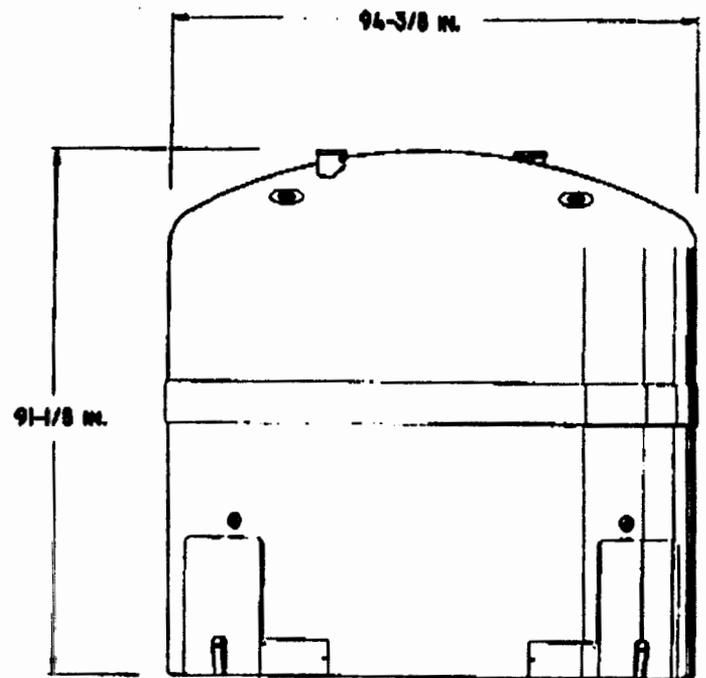
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TRUPACT-II



HALFPACK