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For Immediate Release

Carlsbad Area Office, Westinghouse Win National DOE Quality Awards

WASHINGTON, D. C., October 9 -- The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Area Office and Westinghouse Electric Corporation's Waste Isolation Division were honored by Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary today during the second annual Energy Quality Awards ceremony.

The Carlsbad Area Office received the prestigious 1996 Hammer Award, while Westinghouse was honored by O'Leary for the second consecutive year, winning the 1996 Energy Quality Accomplishment Award.

The Carlsbad Area Office administers the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and National Transuranic programs. Westinghouse is the management and operating contractor for the DOE at the WIPP.

"The quality work of these dedicated employees has saved taxpayer dollars, improved customer service, and shows the American people that this administration is committed to doing more with significantly fewer resources," said O'Leary from the DOE's Headquarters at the Forrestal Building in Washington, D.C.

Twenty-seven DOE organizations comprising approximately 34,000 people (about a fifth of the department's federal and contractor employees) applied for the 1996 Energy Quality Awards.

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The Hammer Award is granted through Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review Program to teams or organizations that have made extraordinary progress in reinventing government. The Carlsbad Area Office is recognized for its recent accomplishments within the DOE Environmental Management program.

The Energy Quality Awards Program is based on the Malcolm Baldrige Quality criteria and the President's Quality Award, which evaluate applicants according to the following criteria:

- Leadership
- Information and analysis
- Strategic planning
- Human resource development and management
- Process management
- Business results
- Customer focus and satisfaction

Westinghouse's Waste Isolation Division also garnered two awards at the recent Employee Involvement Association Conference, held September 11 in Phoenix, Ariz. The company received Industry Group awards in the performance excellence and employee savings categories.

The Employee Involvement Association was established in 1942 with the primary mission of providing industry with a forum for exchanging ideas on what has made business in the United States successful. In recent years the organization has branched out to other countries and now has international representatives in Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom.

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Companies and organizations participating in the program include Toyota, IBM, NASA, Johnson & Johnson, Saturn and American Airlines, to name a few.

"The entire Carlsbad Area Office staff has contributed to and should be recognized for the Hammer Award," said George Dials, manager of the Carlsbad Area Office. "We are proud of the work and the resulting accomplishments that relate to the WIPP and National Transuranic programs.

"DOE and Westinghouse employees should be recognized for their continuous attention to quality performance. This is the level of performance that is expected and required to move the WIPP and National Transuranic programs forward in our efforts to open this nation's first underground nuclear waste repository."

Joe Epstein, general manager of the Waste Isolation Division, said winning an Energy Quality Award is a true indicator that DOE and Westinghouse employees have what it takes to excel at a task.

"As I mentioned last year," said Epstein, "we have received several awards in the total quality arena, but the Energy Quality Award ranks as the most prestigious because it comes from our customer -- the DOE."

O'Leary emphasized the importance of the DOE's assessment process in providing customer satisfaction, cost reduction, increased competitiveness, and, ultimately, in ensuring the department's continuity and established recognition as a world-class organization.

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,

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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 Program administers generation/storage site plans 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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