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For Immediate Release

**DOE to Hold Public Hearings Next Week in Carlsbad
On WIPP Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement**

CARLSBAD, N.M., January 8 -- The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Disposal Phase Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS-II) during a public hearing next week (January 13) in Carlsbad.

Officials from the DOE Carlsbad Area Office will host the public hearing at the Pecos River Village, 711 N. Muscatel. Planned hours for the hearing are 2 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. Attendees not pre-registered may register at the door on the day of the hearing. Session hours may be adjusted as registration demand warrants.

The draft SEIS-II updates information contained in the first WIPP Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, completed in 1990, and the original 1980 WIPP Environmental Impact Statement. The study evaluates the environmental impacts of waste characterization, treatment, and certification; packaging and transportation; site operations and waste emplacement; and long-term performance of the repository.

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Examples include:

- ▶ Inclusion of sites where small quantities of radioactive waste are generated or stored;
- ▶ Changes in the volume of waste since 1990 estimates were made;
- ▶ Legislative changes since 1990, such as the 1992 WIPP Land Withdrawal Act and 1996 amendments to the act;
- ▶ Changes in the planned routes for truck transportation; and
- ▶ Changes in the waste acceptance criteria since 1990.

Comments will also be accepted by mail, electronic mail, or facsimile. Written comments concerning the draft SEIS-II document must be postmarked by January 28, 1997. Comments postmarked after this date will be considered to the extent that is practicable. All written comments should be directed to: **Harold Johnson, NEPA Compliance Officer, Attn.: SEIS Comments, P.O. Box 9800, Albuquerque, NM 87119**. Comments submitted by electronic mail should be sent to **WIPPSEIS@battelle.org**, or by facsimile to **1-505-224-8030**.

For further information or to obtain a copy of the draft SEIS-II, call the toll free WIPP Information line at 1-800-336-9477.

The WIPP is designed to permanently dispose of radioactive transuranic 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.

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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