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To Be...

DOENEWS

For Immediate Release

DOE Ships Drum of Transuranic Waste From New Jersey To Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site in Colorado

GOLDEN, CO., May 22, 1997- One drum of transuranic waste material that originated at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site in the late 1980s and was transported to another facility was returned to Rocky Flats this week for interim storage. Ultimately, the drum of waste may be slated for disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The single 55-gallon drum was returned to Rocky Flats from a private engineering firm in New Jersey May 21. The drum contains about 150 pounds of vitrified (glass encased) lead-borosilicate holding a small amount of plutonium. The waste material was originally transported from Rocky Flats to the New Jersey facility in 1986 under a contract with the DOE to recover reusable materials from the waste.

The return of the material fulfills a long-standing obligation of the DOE to remove the drum from the New Jersey facility. The drum was transported using the Transuranic Package Transporter - Model II (TRUPACT-II) and the transportation system and protocols designed for the transport of transuranic waste to the WIPP. This was the first interstate shipment of transuranic waste using the TRUPACT-II and WIPP transportation system.

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In accordance with the WIPP shipping protocols, each state along the route was notified of the shipment well in advance. The shipping protocols were developed by the Western Governors' Association and have been adopted and implemented by the DOE as the standard for WIPP shipments. Interested Rocky Flats stakeholders and appropriate Colorado regulatory authorities were also notified in advance of the actual shipment.

The truck was monitored along the entire route using the sophisticated TRANSCOM satellite tracking system. Each state was able to track the truck's movements on a computer screen using the TRANSCOM system.

Termed by the National Academy of Sciences as the "safest system on the road today" for transporting hazardous materials, the WIPP transportation system includes a conventional 18-wheel semitrailer-tractor rig, an on-board computer and satellite tracking equipment, and some of the most highly skilled drivers in the business. The TRUPACT-II shipping container has been thoroughly tested and is certified by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the transport of contact-handled transuranic waste.

In addition to fulfilling an obligation to remove the material, the shipment also helps reduce costs of the DOE's waste management program by consolidating smaller quantities of waste at larger sites that are equipped to certify transuranic waste for eventual disposal at the WIPP. The WIPP is scheduled to begin operating in May 1998 as the nation's first deep geologic, permanent repository for transuranic waste generated during the research and production of nuclear weapons.

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