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# DOENews

**For Immediate Release****Los Alamos National Laboratory Deemed Ready  
To Implement WIPP Program Requirements**

**CARLSBAD, N.M., September 17, 1997** – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Area Office today announced that Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has met all program requirements to characterize, certify and, ultimately, ship radioactive transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Each DOE facility generating and/or temporarily storing transuranic waste must meet stringent quality assurance, training, and documentation requirements for processing and shipping waste to the WIPP. LANL's authorization comes after three audits over the past two years in which the laboratory's program was scrutinized by experts representing the DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New Mexico Environment Department, the New Mexico Environmental Evaluation Group and other organizations.

"The authorization of Los Alamos National Laboratory's program satisfies a key milestone on the WIPP Disposal Decision Plan – the DOE's schedule of work that targets May 1998 as the opening date for the project," said George Dials, Manager of the Carlsbad Area Office. "Los Alamos is the first site to make the grade, and it did so two weeks ahead of schedule."

The Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) and the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site are the next facilities in line to be judged for their readiness to characterize, certify and ship waste to the WIPP. The current schedule calls for these sites to achieve authorization in January 1998 and February 1998, respectively. INEEL, LANL, and Rocky Flats are the first three DOE facilities that will ship transuranic waste to the WIPP, once it meets all applicable regulatory requirements to begin disposal operations.

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LANL's authority to operate its WIPP transuranic waste program signifies that the facility has all required procedures and plans in place, and that all personnel have been appropriately trained to implement the program elements. Approximately 3,000 shipments (roughly 82,000 55-gallon drums) of contact-handled transuranic waste will travel from LANL to the WIPP over the life of the project.

A cornerstone of the DOE's national clean-up strategy, the WIPP is designed to permanently dispose of transuranic waste generated by defense-related activities. Located 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 primarily of clothing, tools, rags, and other disposable items contaminated with trace amounts of radioactive elements, mostly plutonium.

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