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# TRU Progress



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A Publication of the U.S. Department of Energy Carlsbad Area Office

## DOE performs verification test of WIPP compliance calculations with EPA's input data

### Results remain within regulatory limit

The Carlsbad Area Office's Repository Performance Assessment process recently concluded a verification test that independently confirmed that the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) could perform within regulatory limits for at least 10,000 years.

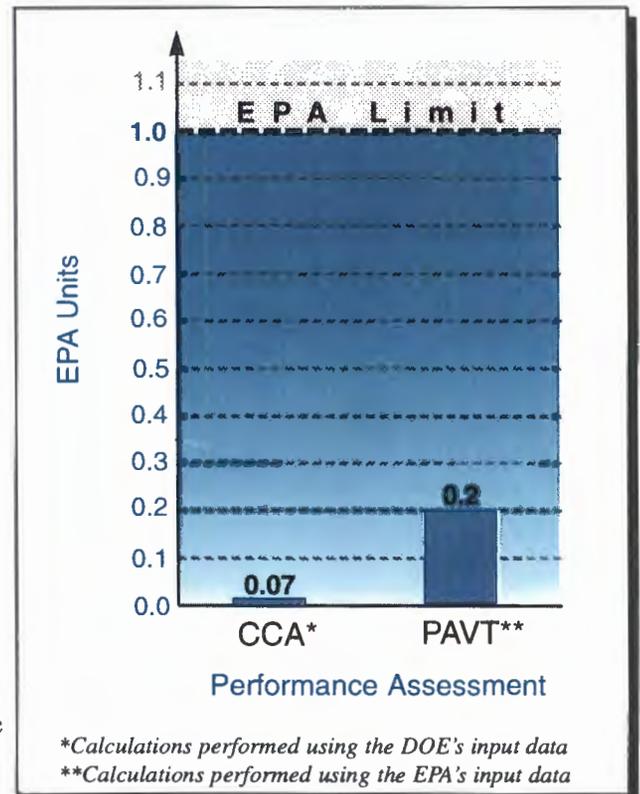
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requested the DOE to perform computer calculations using the EPA's choice in parameter

values and ranges (input data) to assess whether the WIPP repository would be able to contain transuranic waste within regulatory limits for at least 10,000 years.

Sandia National Laboratories conducted the full-scale performance assessment using EPA's range of parameters, and the results were similar to the DOE's compliance demonstration detailed in its application to the EPA. Both performance assessments were well within regulatory limits.

The EPA is expected to factor the results of the verification test into a Proposed Rule in late September.

This rule is to certify whether the WIPP repository meets containment requirements specified under Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations,



The performance assessment verification test (PAVT) showed that the average amount of radioactivity that might be released from the WIPP, even using EPA input data, was well within the regulatory limit set by the EPA. The EPA's input data was developed based on its own independent assessment of parameter values used in the DOE's Compliance Certification Application (CCA) performance assessment process.

Sections 191 and 194. A 120-day public comment period will follow.

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## *Environmental management:*

# WIPP first nuclear site in the U.S. to receive ISO 14001 registration

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) is only the second U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) facility—and first nuclear facility in the United States—to achieve environmental excellence under the International Organization for Standardization's ISO 14001 criterion.

Westinghouse Electric Corporation's Waste Isolation Division, the site's management and operating contractor, and the WIPP received registration under ISO 14001 on August 5. The ISO 14001 is a voluntary standard for developing and implementing an Environmental Management

System. The standard was developed by the International Organization for Standardization, which consists of 112 member countries, including the United States.

Energy Secretary Federico Peña said, "This international recognition confirms that WIPP's environmental management is world class. I congratulate both our federal and contractor employees for their outstanding work."

ISO 14001 serves as a guide for environmental management programs and provides an internationally

recognized framework to measure, evaluate, and audit these programs.

During the week of July 28, auditors with international environmental expertise arrived in Carlsbad to perform a preliminary investigation of the WIPP's Environmental Management System and determine if they could proceed with a full registration audit.

After spending only two days on site, the evaluators determined that they could accelerate the visit into a formal registration audit. At the end of their four-day inspection of the facility, the auditors enthusiastically endorsed the WIPP's ISO 14001 registration.

Lead auditor Dr. Richard Ellis of Advanced Waste Management Systems, Inc. (Hixon, Tennessee), said that the DOE is leading the pack in "federal agencies committed to ISO 14001 implementation."

"We have worked in over 50 countries, from the top of the Andes to the bottom of some Chinese gold mines," said Ellis. "This [the WIPP] certainly ranks among the most unique."

The DOE's Kansas City Plant in Kansas City, Missouri, was the first departmental site to achieve the standard in June 1997. The non-nuclear plant is managed by Allied Signal Corporation. □

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## *Site spotlight:*

# RFETS

**Name:** Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site

**Location:** 16 miles northwest of Denver, Colorado

**Size:** 6,212 acres

**Transuranic waste volumes (in cubic meters):** Contact-handled: Stored - 1,043, Projected - 14,741; Remote-handled: Stored - 0, Projected - 0

**Mission:** Manage waste and materials, clean up and convert the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site to beneficial use in a manner that is safe, environmentally and socially responsible, physically secure, and cost effective.

**Background:** Rocky Flats was created in 1951 and was involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons components. The facility's mission now focuses on cleanup and environmental restoration. Responsibility for the site was transferred to the Department of Energy's Environmental Management Program in 1994. □



Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site plans to begin shipping transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in 1998.

**Local interest:**

# “Community Appreciation Day” attracts hundreds to the WIPP

More than 850 people from seven states toured the WIPP site July 19 to see the underground repository area and exhibits on radioactivity, energy conservation, the WIPP site, and the southeastern New Mexico area.

Most booths, including eight interactive ones, were designed to show visitors how WIPP employees contribute to the site’s mission of isolating transuranic waste from the human environment for thousands of years.

The Department of Energy (DOE) organized Community Appreciation Day to let people in the surrounding communities see firsthand the work it is doing and to thank its supporters. Community participants includ-

ed the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce, the Lea County Chambers of Commerce, and the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring & Research Center.

One DOE contractor used cardboard dinosaurs to help people understand that the ancient salt beds surrounding the WIPP repository were stabilized 225 million years ago—long before the dinosaurs roamed the earth. Others demonstrated

how personal protective equipment such as hard hats and safety belts are used on-site to protect workers and members of the public. □



Hundreds of visitors toured the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant’s aboveground and underground facilities.

**Focus on 2006:**

## Discussion Draft targets specific goals

The comment period for the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) *Accelerating Cleanup: Focus on 2006 Discussion Drafts* closed on September 9. The national and site discussion drafts are the first step in developing a comprehensive plan for accelerating cleanup of DOE facilities nationwide.

While there are no clean-up activities at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), the CAO discussion draft addresses how quickly transuranic waste at DOE sites can be made road-ready and disposed of at the WIPP. The CAO discussion

draft, which is driven by funding availability, considers two scenarios. A low scenario represents approximately 15 percent less than the funding in the President’s fiscal year 1998 budget. A high scenario represents the funding required for full implementation of the *National Transuranic Waste Management Plan*.

Among the goals of the CAO discussion draft are:

- Each transuranic waste site will achieve compliance with current legal agreements and statutory requirements and be in a posi-

tion to accelerate compliance activities.

- Within the first 10 years, 94 percent of those at some risk today are expected to no longer be at risk. Accelerated transuranic waste disposal reduces the risks to the public and the accessible environment created by temporary above-ground storage.

Public comments will be considered in the development of draft national and site 2006 Plans, scheduled to be released later this year. □

**Legal issues:**

# U.S. Court of Appeals upholds EPA criteria

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued a ruling on June 7, 1997, upholding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) criteria for determining whether the U.S.

Department of Energy (DOE) complies with environmental standards for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

The New Mexico and Texas Attorneys General, the Southwest Research and Information Center, Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, and two private individuals filed the lawsuit. The plaintiffs' concern was that the criteria had been changed improperly without public input after meetings between EPA and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) officials.

Citing decisions in previous cases, the court said that communications with persons outside an agency are permissible so long as EPA can justify its rules entirely by reference to the record before it.

Among other things, the court also said:

- the criteria are not required to be more detailed or quantitative
- the standards for the passive institutional controls are sensible

"We have addressed petitioners' strongest arguments, and find no merit in the others," the court ruled. "The petitions for review are therefore denied." □

## New guidelines planned for hearings on RCRA permit

The New Mexico Environment Department has initiated an effort to change regulations governing permitting procedures including the public hearing requirements.

The Carlsbad Area Office has submitted an application to the New Mexico Environment Department for a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Permit. Public hearings are expected to follow the new procedures.

The guidelines are expected to be finalized soon. □



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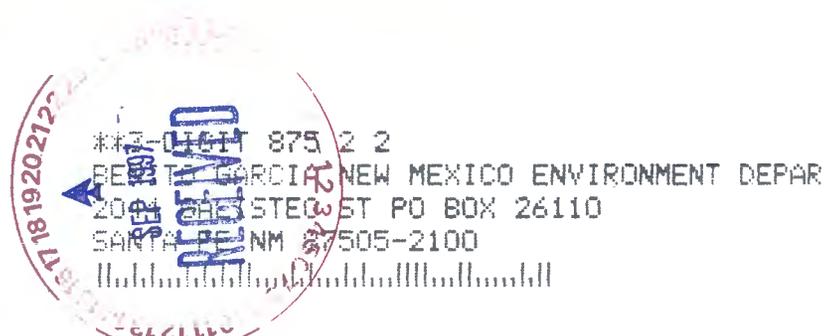
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Visit the National Transuranic  
Waste Program Home Page at  
<http://www.wipp.carlsbad.nm.us>



TRU is the abbreviation for transuranic, the classification of radioactive waste to be disposed of at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

