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For Immediate Release

WIPP Employees Earn Radiological Control Qualification

CARLSBAD, N.M., March 5, 1998 - Four employees of Westinghouse Electric Company's Waste Isolation Division recently earned qualification as radiological control technicians.

Donna Schutt and Cindy May, both of Carlsbad; John Guy, Hobbs; and Glen Galloway, Artesia, all members of the Westinghouse Environment, Safety and Health Department's Operational Health Physics team, successfully completed a comprehensive training schedule qualifying them to oversee radiological work at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). Westinghouse is the management and operating contractor for the U.S. Department of Energy at the WIPP.

These four join Adan Peña and Carolyn Littrell, both of Carlsbad, as qualified radiological control technicians. The Operational Health Physics team now staffs seven qualified radiological control technicians including team leader Casey Gadbury. Russell Whiteley, an experimental technician in the radiochemistry lab, is also qualified, giving the WIPP a total of eight trained technicians.

The technicians are responsible for monitoring for radiation and protecting workers in radiological areas. Most of their work will be in the WIPP's waste handling building, but technicians are also responsible for all other areas on site.

"We are all very proud of these four individuals," said Kevin Donovan, manager of the Environment, Safety and Health Department. "Completing the demanding qualification courses is quite an accomplishment and is a real testament to their dedication and professionalism."

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The nine-month training program included 30 instructional courses as well as underground, hazardous waste, and electrical safety training. The test phase consisted of written and oral exams presented by supervisors, who require technicians pass by 80 percent.

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, stable salt formation 2,150 feet underground. Transuranic waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, and other disposable items contaminated with trace amounts of radioactive elements, mostly plutonium. The project is on schedule to begin disposal operations in May 1998, pending approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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