

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

September 4, 2020

**TO:** Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director  
**FROM:** Alexander Velazquez-Lozada, Cognizant Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for August 2020

**DNFSB Staff Activity:** There were no Board's staff visits to WIPP this month.

**COVID-19 Response.** WIPP continues operating in phase two. Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) continues with two or more people on site; most of their personnel are teleworking. CBFO increased its oversight of construction projects, including the Safety Significant Confinement Ventilation System (SSCVS), the new Utility Shaft, and replacement of the fire detection and safety-significant fire suppression system on the surface. A sudden increase in Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC (NWP), staff COVID-19 cases reduced resources that handle and download waste, thereby impacted waste shipments to the site. By the end of August some of the personnel in quarantine had been cleared and returned to the site, and WIPP started to receive waste again at an average rate of five shipments per week. NWP started segregating the crews on site to minimize cross-over and to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission.

**Safety Basis.** CBFO approved the WIPP Documented Safety Analysis (DSA) and Technical Safety Requirements (TSR) Revision 7. CBFO included a condition of approval that directs additional changes to the DSA, TSR, and the hazards analysis. The prohibition on receiving and emplacing remote-handled waste remains in place.

**SSCVS.** On July 31, 2020, NWP ordered their subcontractor Critical Applications Alliance, LLC (CAA) to stop work on the SSCVS project due to conditions adverse to quality. NWP identified deficiencies in the following areas: Quality Assurance Manager (onsite and meeting key personnel requirements), evidence addressing closure of corrective actions, inspection reports, and work package documentation. By the end of August NWP terminated the CAA contract and is preparing to replace this subcontractor. NWP anticipates delays in the project.

**Ventilation System.** On August 4, 2020, NWP reported that a safety significant High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter differential pressure instrument loop failed to meet the calibration acceptance requirements. The Facility Shift Manager declared the loop inoperable, entered a limiting condition for operation, and switched the filtration train. NWP is trouble-shooting the filter loop to determine the cause of the failure. No radiological release occurred.

**Underground Ventilation.** The 700C unfiltered underground ventilation exhaust fan test has been delayed to October 2020. The target to complete the project is now end of January 2021. CBFO is preparing to release an external communication two weeks prior to the test.

**Fire Protection.** During the annual preventive maintenance of the safety-significant diesel fire pump, personnel observed what appeared to be smoke from the control panel. The pump was turned off and further evaluation identified a burned relay resistor in the controller board. A limiting condition of operation is in place until the controller board can be replaced and the pump can be returned to service.