

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 6, 2020

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

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

COVID-19 Response. WIPP experienced a spike of COVID-19 cases. Although this spike has not impacted operations directly, WIPP is monitoring staffing levels to remain above the minimum required to continue operations. Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) continues to have most of the staff teleworking. The rate of receipt of shipments fluctuated between 3 and 8 shipments per week during this reporting period. WIPP continues processing and downloading waste.

Maintenance Outage. The quarterly maintenance outage scheduled to occur in October was moved to the first week of November 2020 due to inclement weather. WIPP planned a three-day electrical power outage to support preventive maintenance activities on electrical substations.

Safety Significant Confinement Ventilation System (SSCVS). As reported in the August 2020 monthly report, Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC (NWP), terminated the subcontract with Critical Applications Alliance, LLC, due to conditions adverse to quality. NWP contracted Kiewit Corporation to perform an assessment of the project and provide a cost/schedule proposal, and has recently awarded a letter subcontract to Kiewit to continue supporting construction of the SSCVS. The scope of the letter subcontract includes continuing construction of the Salt Reduction Building, concrete finish work, and procurement activities.

Utility Shaft Project (USP). The 180 day temporary authorization (TA), allowing excavation of the new utility shaft, expired on October 24, 2020. WIPP has requested a second TA (an additional 180 days) from the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). When the initial TA expired, USP had paused shaft deepening to install a concrete shaft liner from 115 feet below grade to the shaft collar at the surface. Pending receipt of the second TA, the USP subcontractor has halted work on the concrete liner and is not performing work in the shaft or the plenum footprint. Surface infrastructure work is continuing. In the meantime, the proposed modification to Discharge Permit DP-831 is still in its public comment period until mid-November 2020.

Diesel Fire Pump. As reported in the September 2020 monthly report, the safety-significant diesel powered fire pump was out of service. This month, NWP completed repairs on the diesel-powered fire pump and it is now operational.

Underground Ventilation System. The 700C fan hot-test has been delayed to at least December 2020, with a target to complete the 700C Fan Start-up project by March 2021. WIPP plans to perform an implementation verification review of the revised safety basis before the hot-test. A contractor readiness assessment is scheduled after the hot-test and prior to authorizing continuous operation of the 700C fan. WIPP continues to work toward releasing an external communication prior to commencing the hot-test.