

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 7, 2016

TO: Steven Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: Dermot Winters, WIPP Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Activity Report for September 2016

DNFSB Staff Activity: D. Minnema, D. Burnfield, J. Meszaros, D. Bulen and R. Quirk were onsite at WIPP August 29-September 1 to conduct a review of the Radiological Control program. During September 19-22 R. Quirk was onsite performing oversight duties and B. Broderick, W. Linzau, J. Meszaros and D. Shrestha observed the initial transuranic waste Generator Site Technical Review in support of National Transuranic Waste program improvements at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Staff oversight averaged 4.1 man-weeks/month during FY 2016.

Ground Control. WIPP experienced two significant ground control events at the south end of the mine in September. First, workers reported that an isolation bulkhead that is part of interim closure for Panel 4 had been significantly damaged by ground convergence and entry was prohibited into this area. About a week later, workers identified a major roof fall in this drift that appears to have destroyed the damaged bulkhead.

Maintenance. The members of the staff who assessed the status of the WIPP Maintenance program in June and August provided a closeout briefing to Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) and contractor personnel on September 8, 2016.

Fire Suppression System. NWP continues to deal with degradations of the site's safety-significant fire suppression system. The staff assessed the Fire Protection program in July and provided an closeout briefing to CBFO and contractor personnel on August 13, 2016.

Radiological Control Program. During the Aug. 29-Sept. 1 Radiological Control program review, the staff found that the appropriate program documentation was in place; but was unable to observe radiological control practices in the underground because maintenance problems with the waste hoist precluded access. The staff plans to observe those practices in the underground during the upcoming readiness reviews in order to complete their program assessment.

Permanent Ventilation System (PVS). Staff members completed a review of the preliminary design of the WIPP PVS and concluded it adequately addressed the concern expressed in the Board's Feb. 16, 2016, project letter regarding the by-pass of high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters during normal operations. However, some questions still remain regarding implementation of the HEPA filter by-pass function in the event of an underground fire.

Configuration Management. CBFO sent a letter to NWP outlining several significant configuration management and quality assurance problems noted during the last two years and directed NWP to submit a plan that details how key elements of the related safety management programs will be improved.