

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 4, 2016

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

DNFSB Staff Activity: R. Quirk was onsite performing site-representative-like duties during February 8-12. C. Shuffler was onsite during February 1-4 investigating the use of Continuous Air Monitors (CAMs) in the WIPP underground. D. Winters observed the TRU Waste Corporate Board meeting at the DOE Nevada Support Facility in Las Vegas during February 9-12. Staff oversight has averaged 1.8 man-weeks per month during FY 2016.

Ventilation System Changes. Ductwork installation to tie the new Interim Ventilation System (IVS) into the exhaust air ventilation circuit was completed in February. Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC plans to conduct its Contractor Readiness Assessment (CRA) for startup of the IVS system in March. The staff will assess the adequacy of the CRA.

TRU Waste Corporate Board. TRU Waste Corporate Board discussions focused on the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) National TRU Program actions to implement enhanced oversight of storage/generator site compliance with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Waste Acceptance Criteria (WAC). Enhanced oversight is intended to protect WIPP from a repeat radiological release event similar to the event caused by a non-compliant drum from the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The actions described included both administrative and technical components. The staff will assess the enhanced oversight program as it becomes implemented.

Documented Safety Analysis (DSA). CBFO and NWP personnel continue to work on updating the WIPP safety basis. At the end of the month, NWP formally submitted proposed revisions to the DSA to DOE-CBFO for review. The CBFO review of this version of the DSA will likely last several weeks because there are many DOE comments that had not been resolved during earlier discussions.

Effectiveness of CAMs in the WIPP Underground. On February 17, members of the staff conducted a closeout with CBFO, DOE Headquarters, and NWP personnel to present concerns identified during the February 1-4 review of the effectiveness of CAMs in the WIPP underground. DOE and NWP personnel committed to addressing improvements involving alarm notification, alarm response and equipment staging. The committed improvements reduce, but do not eliminate, the radiological risk to underground workers from a repeat radiological release event. During the closeout, NWP personnel presented the results of a recent evaluation that concluded the radiological exposure to workers in the underground with the current control strategy would be insignificant. Staff members are assessing this new evaluation.