

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

November 1, 2024

**TO:** Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director  
**FROM:** Douglas J. Brown, Acting Cognizant Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for October 2024

**DNFSB Staff Activity.** The Board's WIPP cognizant engineer held weekly meetings to maintain awareness of mining and waste handling activities. On October 1–3, 2024, the Board's Vice Chair T. Summers and technical staff conducted a site visit and observed the WIPP annual emergency exercise.

**Safety Achievement.** As of September 30, 2024, Salado Isolation Mining Contractors (SIMCO) and subcontractors have worked over 3 million hours since the last lost time injury. In fiscal year 2024, SIMCO established an aggressive goal of achieving a total recordable injury rate (TRIR) of 0.3. Most noteworthy, SIMCO's TRIR of 0.2 is significantly below the industry average, below the Environmental Management goal of 1.1, and the lowest in over a decade.

**WIPP Annual Emergency Exercise.** On October 2, 2024, SIMCO conducted an exercise scenario that included a forklift breaching a waste container in the contact-handled waste bay, resulting in a release of radioactive material, immediately followed by a security event involving an employee armed with a weapon. Site emergency response assets were activated, along with the Emergency Operations Center and Joint Information Center at the Skeen-Whitlock Building.

**TRUPACT Truck Incident.** On October 9, 2024, a shipment of empty TRUPACTs was involved in a minor accident in New Mexico on I-40 near Albuquerque, NM. A privately owned vehicle (POV) veered into the WIPP truck's lane and contacted the driver's side of the transport. Minimal damage occurred to the tractor and payload. NM State Police responded and cited the POV driver. The shipment was returned to WIPP for engineering evaluation.

**Air Intake Shaft (AIS) Hoist Returned to Service.** On October 10, 2024, the AIS hoist was returned to service (see WIPP Monthly for September 2024). While the hoist was out of service, SIMCO maintenance installed a new bearing oiler, SIMCO engineering conducted field testing, and a third-party hoisting engineering firm reviewed the data. SIMCO and the third-party indicated there were no current concerns with resuming limited use of the hoist.

**Flooding Affects WIPP Shipments.** On October 20, 2024, flooding occurred near Roswell, NM that resulted in damage to a bridge on U.S. Highway 285, affecting the normal transit route of some defense-related transuranic waste shipments to WIPP. The Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) suspended shipments that would use the highway in the impacted area. Reduced rate shipments resumed on October 29 via route bypassing the damaged bridge. On October 31, CBFO paused Northern shipments until the U.S. Highway 285 bridge is reopened.

**Safety Significant Confinement Ventilation System (SSCVS) Turned Over.** On October 23, 2024, SIMCO Operations began a planned 90-day run of the facility prior to readiness activities, which is a significant milestone. This run starts with the contractor, The Industrial Company, operating jointly for 30 days, followed by SIMCO operating exclusively for the remainder.