

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

August 1, 2025

**TO:** Technical Director  
**FROM:** WIPP Cognizant Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for July 2025

**DNFSB Staff Activity.** The WIPP and National Transuranic Waste Program cognizant engineers held weekly meetings to maintain awareness of mining and waste handling activities.

**Underground Ventilation System (UVS) Startup.** On July 12, 2025, workers completed the final connection between the UVS and the underground and placed the legacy system fans (860 and 960 series fans) out of service. Salado Isolation Mining Contractors, LLC (SIMCO) personnel placed the UVS in service, restricting underground access to essential personnel during final testing and balancing activities.

**Technical Safety Requirements (TSR) Violation Contact-Handled (CH) Bay.** On July 17, 2025, SIMCO personnel declared a TSR violation for an improper mode change in the CH Bay. On July 16, 2025, waste handling personnel exited waste handling mode and entered standby mode, leaving the facility in a configuration in which three shipping packages had their outer lids removed overnight. The facility should have been left in storage mode. The facility shift manager identified the problem during shift turnover on July 17, 2025. Waste handling personnel promptly switched to the compliant mode. The DNFSB cognizant engineer attended the event learning review, where several compensatory actions were proposed, including: (1) providing additional briefings to the waste handling team regarding mode change expectations, (2) implementing a senior supervisor watch, and (3) briefing the central monitoring room operators and facility shift managers on TSR violations and the requirements for mode changes.

**Underground Vehicle Incident.** On July 17, 2025, a load-haul-dump (LHD) vehicle equipped with an attachment used for installing chain-link mesh on the mine back contacted the overhead dome light cable system, pulling it out of place and causing damage to the overhead lighting system. The LHD operator and spotter stopped work and promptly notified management, and the affected area was cordoned off. SIMCO management held an event learning review on July 21, 2025, where several corrective actions were proposed, including: (1) providing briefings to underground crews regarding lessons learned, (2) evaluating lighting positioning to reduce recurrence, and (3) performing a walkdown prior to resuming operation through the impacted area.

**Parking Area Vehicle Incident.** On July 28, 2025, an operator of a trailer jockey contacted a trailer, damaging the light bar due to the trailer being too low to slide under the hitch properly. Minimal damage to the trailer was sustained. SIMCO's transportation group is evaluating the damage.

**Salt Handling Shaft Refurbishment Update.** On July 29, 2025, SIMCO personnel reestablished the salt hoist capabilities for orderly or emergency egress use, increasing the total number of available egress options from the underground to three and increasing occupancy limits from 75 to 145 personnel, depending on hoist availability. As repair work within the salt pocket (the area below the salt handling shaft) continues, a work deck may sometimes be required to be installed beneath the salt hoist conveyance. In this configuration, travel with the conveyance is limited, and underground access is restricted to the lower limit of 75 personnel.