

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 5, 2025

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

**DNFSB Staff Activity.** The WIPP and National Transuranic Waste Program cognizant engineers held periodic meetings to maintain awareness of mining and waste-handling activities. Additionally, the WIPP cognizant engineer virtually attended the WIPP community forum event on November 6, 2025.

On November 13, 2025, a DNFSB staff team transmitted an agenda to review the adequacy and effectiveness of existing lightning protection systems at WIPP. On November 25, 2025, another DNFSB staff team transmitted an agenda to review the contractor issues management system implemented by Salado Isolation Mining Contractors, LLC (SIMCO) and overseen by the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) at WIPP.

**Federal Oversight.** CBFO maintained federal staffing through the government shutdown, from October 1, 2025, to November 12, 2025. However, several technical support contractors, contracted to CBFO with safety oversight responsibilities, were temporarily suspended from October 23, 2025, through November 12, 2025.

**Fiscal Year 2025 Waste Processing.** SIMCO met their operational goals for downloading waste in fiscal year 2025, successfully processing 432 of the 425-shipment target. Of these, the majority, approximately 290, originated from Idaho National Laboratory.

**Waste Hoist Issue.** On November 17, 2025, the waste hoist experienced a resistance temperature detector failure and waste hoist charring system failures, leading to a temporary suspension of shipments to the WIPP site. SIMCO personnel placed the waste hoist out-of-service for maintenance on these systems and returned the waste hoist to service on November 29, 2025. During this hoist service outage, SIMCO limited the number of personnel in the underground at any given time to 60. SIMCO management is planning significant work on waste hoist infrastructure, which will include leveling the waste hoist station and replacing the waste hoist motor, during the annual maintenance outage from mid-December 2025 through March 2026. Waste shipments to WIPP will be suspended during most of the outage.

**Annual Full Scale Emergency Exercise.** On September 10, 2025, WIPP personnel conducted their annual full-scale emergency exercise (see WIPP Monthly for September 2025). On October 23, 2025, SIMCO emergency management personnel transmitted their formal after-action report as required by DOE Order 151.1D, *Comprehensive Emergency Management System*, to CBFO. The SIMCO evaluation team concluded that of the 36 objectives evaluated, 32 objectives were met, three were not met, and one was determined not applicable. The SIMCO team provided three findings related to each unmet objective: (1) improper donning of personal protective equipment by radiological control technicians during response and decontamination activities, (2) untimely notice of protective actions via the public address system, and (3) delays in achieving accountability for exercise participants. On November 24, 2025, SIMCO submitted to CBFO for approval a formal corrective action plan to address these findings.