

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

February 6, 2026

TO: Technical Director
FROM: WIPP Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for January 2026

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

On January 21, 2026, a DNFSB staff team held a teleconference with personnel from the Carlsbad Field Office and Salado Isolation Mining Contractors, LLC (SIMCO) as part of their evaluation of lightning protection systems at WIPP. WIPP's lightning hazard control system, installed in the 1980s, consists of a dissipation array system (DAS), which uses a charge transfer technology to reduce the likelihood of direct lightning strikes to workers, equipment, and waste containers. In 2016, due to concerns over age-related degradation, Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC completed significant maintenance on the DAS and recertified it in 2020. DNFSB staff continue to evaluate the current engineering documentation, maintenance approach, and hazard scenario development related to this system.

Waste Hoist Issue. On December 19, 2025, the waste hoist experienced a lilly controller fault. The lilly controller is a safety device that limits the hoist speed at predefined locations in the shaft and initiates a stop when the hoist speed exceeds these limits. Following this fault, SIMCO personnel placed the waste hoist out of service for repairs to the lilly controller module and returned it to service on January 8, 2026. This unexpected outage caused delays in clearing the waste handling facility floor. SIMCO personnel are investigating additional controller module repairs to prevent recurrence. The waste hoist experienced service issues in August and November 2025 (see WIPP monthly reports for August and November 2025). In February 2026, SIMCO management personnel plan to begin significant upgrades to the waste hoist, which will include leveling the waste hoist station and replacing the waste hoist motor.

TRUPACT-II Missing Seal Test Port Plug. On January 12, 2026, SIMCO waste handling technicians began processing a TRUPACT-II shipment from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). After removing the outer containment vessel lid, the technicians noticed that the inner containment vessel (ICV) seal test port plug was missing. The ICV seal test port consists of a brass plug and accompanying O-ring seal and serves to protect the ICV seal test port from debris that could negatively impact a leak test. SIMCO's waste handling technicians immediately stopped work and made notifications to the central monitoring room and packaging engineer, as required. The following day, during investigations, technicians at the Radioassay and Nondestructive Testing facility at LANL discovered the missing inner containment vessel seal test port plug. Failure to install this plug is a violation of U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) TRUPACT-II Certificate of Compliance, NRC Docket No. 71-9218, Revision 28. Additionally, this condition is NRC-reportable under 10 CFR 71.95 and DOE Order 232.2A, *Occurrence Reporting and Processing of Operations Information* and is accordingly documented in the Occurrence Reporting and Processing System.