

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 6, 2026

**TO:** Technical Director  
**FROM:** WIPP Cognizant Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for February 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 February 11, 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 the ongoing review of the WIPP contractor issues management system. Since assuming the management and operating contract in February 2023, SIMCO made several changes to issues management processes. Most notably, SIMCO overhauled the event learning review process and implemented a management review board process to periodically oversee the quality of causal analyses and completion of corrective actions. The DNFSB staff team is now evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the program by sampling individual issues.

**Salt Hoist Spark Event.** On January 27, 2026, SIMCO maintenance personnel placed the salt hoist out-of-service, de-energized the system, and performed a lockout tagout on electrical circuits feeding the magnetic switch to support corrective maintenance. The magnetic switch is a 120-volt electromagnetically actuated contactor used to control power to the hoist motor. The following day, while working on the switch, SIMCO maintenance personnel observed an electrical spark to ground. SIMCO maintenance personnel promptly paused work, notified the facility shift manager, and placed the salt hoist out-of-service. Upon further investigation, SIMCO personnel determined that the conductor feeding the magnetic switch was not de-energized during the lockout tagout process, as three conductors had identical labels, which caused confusion during lockout tagout implementation. SIMCO management held event learning review and stakeholder meetings on February 10, 2026, and further identified that documented electrical drawings did not have the correct level of detail. SIMCO management personnel plan to further investigate through an apparent cause analysis and develop corrective actions accordingly.

**Waste Hoist Motor Replacement.** On February 16, 2026, SIMCO personnel began work to replace the 600-horsepower waste hoist motor with the readily available spare. This motor has been in-service since WIPP's inception and is the primary mechanism for transporting waste, material, and personnel into and out of the underground. SIMCO management decided to replace the motor because the insulators on the motor windings were beginning to degrade. SIMCO personnel successfully completed the replacement work efforts and brought the new motor online on February 27, 2026. SIMCO personnel plan to refurbish the original motor and retain it as a ready spare.

**Resumption of Shipments.** Waste shipments to WIPP, which were paused in mid-December 2025 due to the annual maintenance outage, resumed on March 3, 2026.