

Testimony of Mr. Joe Franco  
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Before the  
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Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Public Hearing  
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Good afternoon, Vice Chairman. I am Joe Franco, DOE Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today. As CBFO Manager, I have overall responsibility for WIPP and I am here to tell you that the last 14 months have been particularly challenging. Despite those challenges I believe we have made significant strides and are well on our way to recovering the facility and restarting waste emplacement. Over the next several hours we will be discussing the recovery process, and many of the changes that are taking place at the facility. Since the topics for this session focuses on safety and federal oversight, I'll limit my remarks to those areas. As always, safety comes first and is my top priority.

The WIPP Recovery Plan that was issued on September 30, 2014, identified seven key elements as the strategy to safely resume emplacing waste at WIPP. The first key element -- safety-- is paramount to the overall recovery strategy and is what we will focus on today. Immediately following the February events, actions were taken to secure and stabilize the plant, restrict on-site access to essential personnel, assess site conditions and status and evaluate potential radiological releases and potential personnel exposures. As we began our internal analysis of the events we initiated the deployment of new management and corporate subject matter experts to perform independent evaluations of the Safety Management Programs and implementation of compensatory measures to address any deficiencies.

A number of inadequacies were identified in the Safety Management Programs associated with the incident. Compensatory measures were put in place to address the unreviewed safety questions (USQ). Compensatory measures were implemented through the development of Evaluations of the Safety of the Situation (ESS) to ensure the protection of the workers, the public, and the environment. The ESS

documents augment the existing Documented Safety Analysis (DSA) until a revision is issued. That revised DSA will incorporate the controls currently implemented under each ESS.

There are currently eight approved ESS documents and two additional documents still in the approval process. ESS-2014-01, addressing WIPP habitability, was issued to implement the operational restrictions and interim controls required to assure the underground ventilation filtration system remains in service by ensuring early detection of abnormal conditions. In addition, this ESS documents the installation of a real time continuous air monitor as a discretionary measure to reduce the radiological risk to the general site population.

For the second topic, federal oversight, CBFO has made significant progress during the past 12 months in enhancing both the structure and effectiveness of oversight. Judgment of Need (JON) 24 from the Fire Event AIB Report identified the need for CBFO to establish and implement an effective line management oversight program and processes that would meet the requirements of DOE Order 226.1B, *Implementation of Department of Energy Oversight Policy*, and hold personnel accountable for implementing those programs and processes.

The previous CBFO organization had a number of positions with shared responsibilities in both program management (cost, scope, and schedule) and contractor oversight. With these shared responsibilities staff was not able to fully focus in either area. To enhance the oversight independence from programmatic responsibilities CBFO reorganized and segregated contractor oversight from program management. The result was the creation of two new offices, the Office of Program Management and the Office of Operations Oversight.

New positions created in Program Management focus specifically on the integration of program management within CBFO and are intended to ensure that cost, scope, and schedule of all CBFO activities are fully integrated and managed successfully through recovery and throughout the expected lifecycle of the facility. The staffs in these Program Management positions regularly interface with other CBFO staff to ensure the cost, scope, and schedule of these activities is well-represented and has the necessary resources to accomplish mission needs.

The reorganization will allow more focus on conducting oversight of the CBFO program participants to ensure that transuranic (TRU) waste characterization/certification, transportation, and disposal is conducted safely and compliantly. In the Office of Operations Oversight, new oversight positions were

created in the areas of operations oversight with additional facility representatives, radiological protection, industrial hygiene, confinement ventilation, mine safety, technical qualifications and training, nuclear safety, and work control.

As a stop-gap measure we were able to obtain highly qualified personnel from around the DOE complex, on detail to WIPP. However, now many of the new CBFO positions have been filled and position descriptions are being revised to align with this reorganization. The CBFO organization is undergoing this positive culture change to be better equipped for addressing both the program management and oversight needs as it works its way through WIPP recovery and the resumption of transuranic waste disposal operations.