

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

December 2, 2016

TO: Steven Stokes, Technical Director
FROM: Dermot Winters, WIPP Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Activity Report for November 2016

DNFSB Staff Activity: M. Forsbacka and A. Martin were at the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) during November 9-10 to observe the 60% design review for the WIPP Permanent Ventilation System. During November 14-19, D. Winters, R. Quirk, D. Minnema and D. Owen were onsite to observe week one of the DOE Operational Readiness Review (DORR). R. Quirk returned to observe the second and final week of the DORR during November 28-December 2. Staff onsite oversight during FY-2017 has averaged 4.9 man-weeks/month.

Permanent Ventilation System (PVS). Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC (NWP) personnel held the PVS 60% design review during 9-10 November. It appears that work on design documents is progressing rapidly. However, safety boundaries remain in need of further definition. As an example, the existence of an option to bypass the High Efficiency Particulate (HEPA) filters in the case of an underground fire remains a potential source of a radiation release. NWP needs to evaluate whether such an event would actually cause HEPA filter clogging and blowout to determine if the need for a bypass could be eliminated. A staff review agenda is in development for an interaction in January 2017.

DOE Operational Readiness Review (DORR). During week one of the DORR staff members observed demonstrations of waste handling operations (from unloading the TRUPACT-II to emplacement in the non-contaminated portion of the underground). In addition to observing the DORR itself, a staff member completed a previously suspended review of WIPP radiological control practices by observing radiological control technician support of ground control operations in Panel 7 in the WIPP underground. A final DORR report was under development during November 28-December 2 and is expected to be released in early December. The staff will track closure of the DORR findings as well as any findings remaining open from the prior contractor ORR to verify that a resumption of WIPP disposal operations can be performed in a manner that will adequately protect the workers and the public.

Ground Control. Following a late October technical assist visit by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and a November 3 major roof fall in Room 4, Panel 7, NWP has accelerated the pace of roof bolting. Due to bolting progress made during November, NWP and CBFO are optimistic that the remaining accessible disposal space in Panel 7 can be preserved for use. The staff continues to monitor progress toward full stabilization of ground conditions at WIPP.