

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

January 6, 2017

**TO:** Steven Stokes, Technical Director  
**FROM:** Anthony Battaglia and Dermot Winters, WIPP Cognizant Engineers  
**SUBJECT:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for December 2016

**DNFSB Staff Activity:** R. Quirk observed the second and final week of the Department of Energy (DOE) Operational Readiness Review (DORR) during November 28-December 2 in addition to conducting routine oversight the same week. C. March was onsite during December 5-9 observing a meeting on a fire protection exemption request for the WIPP underground. D. Winters was onsite on December 16 and D. Owen was onsite during December 21-22 to observe closure of open items and pre-start findings from the DORR. Staff onsite oversight during FY-2017 has averaged 4.3 person-weeks/month.

**DOE Operational Readiness Review (DORR).** The DORR was completed on December 1 and the final report was issued on December 8, 2016. The review team identified 21 pre-start findings, 15 post-start findings, and 29 opportunities for improvements. Additionally, the report noted 18 previously identified pre-start or pre-requisite open items requiring closure prior to restart. The review team recommended that waste emplacement be authorized to resume upon: completion of the manageable list of pre-start or pre-requisite open items, verification of closure of DORR prestart findings, and approval of corrective action plans for DORR post-start findings. The review team recommended that corrective action review, acceptance, and closure verification for pre-start findings be performed by the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) with DORR team member concurrence. Board staff members observed closure meetings for several pre-start findings and reviewed several closure packages, finding each adequate.

**Resumption of Waste Emplacement.** On December 23, 2016, CBFO authorized Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC (NWP) to resume contact-handled waste emplacement for the waste in the Waste Handling Building that does not require the Basis of Knowledge documentation. Waste emplacement operations are expected to start in early January 2017.

**Ground Control.** NWP continues to make progress with roof bolting installing an average of 19 bolts per shift with a goal of 10 bolts per shift and improving floor conditions in Panel 7. CBFO identified multiple issues with floor heaves in the path for waste emplacement and NWP has worked to restore the floor to support waste handling activities. The staff continues to monitor the progress toward full stabilization of ground conditions at WIPP.

**Potential Roof Fall Hazard.** As a result of one of the DORR prestart findings, NWP declared a positive Unreviewed Safety Question (USQ) for a larger than anticipated roof fall hazard and the proximity of future emplaced waste to abandoned, fueled vehicles in Panel 7, Room 6. CBFO approved an Evaluation of the Safety of the Situation and a Technical Safety Requirements change to address the positive USQ.