

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

October 4, 2024

TO: Timothy J. Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: Douglas J. Brown, Acting Cognizant Engineer
SUBJECT: Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for September 2024

DNFSB Staff Activity. The Board's WIPP cognizant engineer held weekly meetings to maintain awareness of mining and waste handling activities. On September 9, 2024, DOE Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) briefed the Board as requested regarding the continuous air monitor system for the WIPP Safety Significant Confinement Ventilation System.

Air Intake Shaft (AIS) Hoist. The supplier and annual inspector of WIPP hoists, Siemag-Tecberg, indicated that the AIS hoist is safe to use. However, they have also indicated that some hoist bearings are highly worn. Accordingly, Siemag-Tecberg suggested that some mitigations be established to minimize any concerns about the hoist availability. Salado Isolation Mining Company, LLC (SIMCO) leadership elected to declare the AIS hoist out-of-service on September 12, 2024, until further evaluation and an independent review is conducted.

Salt Pocket Refurbishment Project. The hoisting of salt to the surface via the salt handling hoist has been suspended until completion of the salt pocket remining and refurbishment. The salt pocket remining/refurbishment contractor, Cementation, completed mobilization to the site in September and will start demolition work in October. Refurbishment includes demolition of existing steel and equipment, re-mining and re-supporting the excavated walls of the pocket, and installation of new steel and equipment. Completion is projected for January 2025. Underground tours are being severely limited until the salt pocket work has been completed.

New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Reportable Event. On August 21, 2024, SIMCO received an Administrative Compliance Order from NMED. The Order alleges that there are three specific instances of non-compliances with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Hazardous Waste Facility Permit. SIMCO provided evidence to the Nuclear Material Events Database, consisting of actions to mitigate the conditions observed. CBFO and SIMCO filed a formal response to contest the alleged non-compliance related to combustible materials.

Technical Safety Requirement (TSR) Violation Reportable Event. On August 27, 2024, a TSR violation occurred due to a Waste Handling Technician moving a pallet of waste prior to mode shift from Waste Storage to Waste Handling in the Contact-Handled Bay.

Fire Water System TSR Violation Reportable Event. On September 17, 2024, a TSR violation occurred due to manipulating the fire water system in the Waste Handling Building prior to entering the appropriate limiting conditions of operation (LCO). Facility Operations workers performed a lockout/tagout for the removal of a fire water valve. The Roving Watch realized the manipulation of the fire water system was in violation of the approved fire water system lineup and made notifications. The Facility Shift Manager then entered the LCO. SIMCO Management determined that Facility Operations needed to enter the LCO prior to manipulating fire water system per the Documented Safety Analysis and declared a TSR violation.