

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

April 1, 2016

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

DNFSB Staff Activity: D. Winters, C. Berg, and N. George of the staff were onsite March 23–24 supporting a site visit by Board Chair J. Connery and Board Member B. Hamilton. R. Quirk was onsite performing site-representative-like duties during March 28–31. Oversight has averaged 2.4 man-weeks per month during FY 2016.

Ventilation System Changes. During the March 23–24 Board and staff site visit, the tie-in of the new Interim Ventilation System (IVS) into the exhaust air ventilation circuit system was examined. Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC (NWP) now plans to conduct its Contractor Readiness Assessment (CRA) for startup of the IVS system in April. The staff reviewed the plan of action for the CRA and will assess its execution.

Documented Safety Analysis (DSA). Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) and NWP personnel continue to develop Revision 5 of the WIPP DSA. NWP formally submitted proposed revisions to the DSA to CBFO for review at the end of February. The CBFO review was nearing completion at the end of March and their final approval is expected in April. DNFSB staff continue to assess the adequacy of Revision 5 of the DSA as it nears approval.

National TRU Program (NTP). The CBFO's NTP plans—implementing enhanced oversight of storage/generator site compliance with the WIPP Waste Acceptance Criteria—were reviewed during the March 23–24 site visit. The enhanced process will be outlined in Chapter 18 of Revision 5 of the WIPP DSA. The staff will continue to assess the enhanced oversight program as it is developed and implemented.

Continuous Air Monitors (CAMs) in the Underground. On March 21, the staff held a teleconference with CBFO staff to discuss potential worker exposure from a repeat radiological event in Panels 6 or 7. The current placement and use of portable CAMs might not promptly notify workers of a release. CBFO and NWP management recognize the need to improve the situation and are accelerating the installation of improved CAMs (i-CAMs). Once installed and networked to the Central Monitoring Room (CMR) they will provide rapid notification of a release and the need for workers to take protective action, as CMR operators receiving alarms will immediately notify all workers in the underground via the public address system. On March 31, 5 i-CAMs were operating in the underground—at the 308 bulkhead, Panel 7 air intake, Panel 8 air exhaust, Radiological Buffer Area (RBA) boundary and in RBA at E-140/S-2520. Installation of i-CAMs at the Panel 6 intake and exhaust drifts and 2 in the Panel 7 exhaust drift is imminent. Networking of the i-CAMS to the CMR is expected by late June. The staff will continue to review NWP's progress in implementing this safety improvement.