



SUSANA MARTINEZ  
Governor  
JOHN A. SANCHEZ  
Lieutenant Governor

*State of New Mexico*  
**ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

*Office of the Secretary*

Harold Runnels Building  
1190 Saint Francis Drive, PO Box 5469  
Santa Fe, NM 87502-5469  
Telephone (505) 827-2855 Fax (505) 827-2836  
www.nmenv.state.nm.us



DAVE MARTIN  
Secretary  
RAJ SOLOMON, P.E.  
Deputy Secretary

NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT  
Secretary David Martin

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
Secretary Catherine Torres, M.D.

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION  
STATE FIRE MARSHAL DIVISION

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Media Contacts:  
Jim Winchester (NMED)  
Cell: (505)231-8800  
Chris Minnick (DOH)  
Cell: (575) 649-0754  
Gerald Garner, Jr. (PRC)  
Cell: (505) 699-7991

## **State Emergency Responders Complete WIPP Training**

SANTA FE-- The Governor's WIPP Task Force, the New Mexico WIPP Transportation Safety Program Working Group, is proud to announce nearly 500 New Mexico emergency responders successfully completed specialized training this past year that will ensure safe transport of the nation's defense-related radioactive waste.

"This specialized training is critical to the success of the WIPP program," New Mexico Environment Department Secretary David Martin said. "We are grateful to those who took time to complete this course. It shows the commitment that these emergency responders have to protect both New Mexican residents and New Mexico's precious environment."

Over the past year, July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011, four hundred ninety three (493) emergency responders completed the WIPP/Hazardous Materials Hospital Training Course "**Hospital Decontamination and Personal Protective Equipment Workshop.**" The training focused on the emergency response awareness and implementation of established procedures in dealing with patients who might be contaminated with hazardous or radioactive materials.

All participants in the workshop are emergency responders who work on the WIPP corridor route. Training was provided by emergency response experts from three of the WIPP Task Force agencies: New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Radiation Control Bureau, New Mexico Department of Health's Bureau of Health Emergency Management, and the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission's State Fire Marshal's Office. The medical attendees are hospital personnel nurses (135), respiratory therapists (15), emergency room technicians (19), hospital pharmacists (6), hospital environmental services (28), security officers (9), doctors (3), and other hospital personnel (128).

"Training medical professionals to respond to an emergency is a critical part of the WIPP Transportation Safety Program and will ensure the health and safety of all New Mexicans," said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres. "This was a great hands-on training where the students learned by actually wearing personal protective equipment, using instruments and setting up showers and decontamination lines. Medical professionals learn a lot more about how to stay safe when responding to an emergency with hands-on training than if they just sit in a classroom and watch a presentation with a demo."

The Governor's WIPP Task Force is actively involved in providing training and equipment to emergency responders along the designated WIPP corridor route. The Working Group's membership is composed of representative from seven (7) state agencies. Each representative contributes a working knowledge and expertise in the transportation of hazardous and radioactive materials. Specifically, the competence of the Working Group is in the areas of: emergency management and homeland security, training, hospital emergency room response, fire protection and rescue, radiological assessment and environmental protection, law enforcement incident response, vehicle inspections of hazardous and radioactive materials shipments, highway route designation for certain shipments of hazardous and radioactive materials, and radioactive materials transportation policy.

"We at the New Mexico State Fire Marshal's Office are proud to be a part of this important emergency-preparedness training effort," said New Mexico State Fire Marshal John Standefer. "Through this collaborative effort we are working to ensure the safety and well-being of New Mexico's residents.

"Over the course of the past year, we've been able to train an estimated 500 people and provide equipment to the state's first responders," SFMO Standefer continued. "We hope this training is never required in a real-life situation, but should an emergency arise, we are confident that the people we've trained will be able to put this knowledge to good use thus minimizing the potential impact on the public at large."

Areas of concentration were: proper use of PPE, respiratory protection, radiation instrumentation usage and patient decontamination procedures, proper hospital emergency room preparations, discussion of hospital's emergency response plan, and proper use and set-up of decontamination shower. The course is approved for four (4) CEUs through the New Mexico Nursing Association and it is approved for two Category A CEUs for continuing education units, through the NMED's Medical Imaging & Radiation Therapy Program, for hospital radiologists and nuclear medicine staff.

"These trainings are core to the New Mexico WIPP Transportation Safety Program," Task Force Coordinator, Anne deLain Clark said. "They represent decades of collaborative development across state agencies and the federal government. We are proud to know that New Mexico is among the best prepared states in dealing with a hazmat disaster involving radioactive materials."

As with most hazardous materials emergencies, the response efforts are multifaceted, and they involve a delicate and important interaction with the local medical community. Hospitals that were provided the

training were: Christus St. Vincent, Roswell Regional Hospital, Eastern NM Medical Center (Roswell), Gallup Public Health Indian Hospital, Los Alamos Medical Center, Lincoln county Medical Center (Ruidoso), Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital (Gallup), Nor-Lea General Hospital (Lovington), Miner's Colfax Medical Center (Raton), Carlsbad Medical Center, Alta Vista Regional (Las Vegas), University of New Mexico, Heart Hospital of New Mexico (Albuquerque), and ACL Hospital (Acoma).

Other responders participating in the training were EMT/paramedics (80), firefighters (67), and police (3). Fire and Rescue departments that were trained were: Las Vegas, Carlsbad, Grants, Gallup Lovington, Chaves County Volunteer (Roswell), and District 3 of the NM State Police.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, safely disposes of the nation's defense-related transuranic radioactive waste. Located in the Chihuahuan Desert, outside Carlsbad, N.M., WIPP began disposal operations in March 1999

The funding for the New Mexico WIPP Transportation Safety Program is provided by the U.S. Department of Energy. The funds are utilized to enhance the State's emergency response capabilities in areas of: WIPP transportation monitoring activities, emergency response planning, training and exercise development, providing equipment and supplies to responders, and public awareness and participation in the state's WIPP Transportation Safety Program.

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