

**SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR**Ryan Flynn, *Cabinet Secretary*Butch Tongate, *Deputy Secretary***NEWS RELEASE****March 21, 2014**

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**Environment Department Withdraws Draft Permit for
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Class 3 Permit Modification Request**

Department Needs Additional Information Related To The Two Recent Incidents At WIPP

Santa Fe – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) today notified U.S. Department of Energy Waste Isolation Pilot Plant leaders that it has withdrawn the pending draft Permit for the Class 3 Permit modification request in light of the February 5, 2014 fire in the underground and the February 14, 2014 radioactive material release. NMED has requested, and will be requesting additional information related to these events that may influence the draft Permit. The withdrawal of the draft Permit is effective immediately and closes the current 60-day public comment period.

“NMED cannot move forward on the WIPP’s request to open additional underground storage panels and for the other requested permit modifications until more information is known about the recent events at the WIPP,” said Environment Secretary Ryan Flynn. “Just as NMED needs more information to make informed decisions on permit modifications, the public also needs more information about the radiation release in order to provide informed input during the public comment period. Once NMED has all of our questions answered, we will proceed with consideration of a revised draft Permit.”

On March 18, 2013, NMED received the Class 3 Permit Modification Request which included three items: (1) Modifications to the WIPP Panel Closure; (2) Repository Reconfiguration of Panels 9 and 10; and (3) Changes to the Volatile Organic Compound Monitoring Program. The draft permit was issued by NMED for public comment on February 14, 2014, and the comment period was scheduled to conclude on April 15, 2014. NMED may issue a revised draft when it is appropriate, but no timetable has been set for a possible reissuance due to the WIPP shutdown and ongoing incident investigation. In such a case, a revised draft Permit will be issued for public comment and a new public comment period will begin in accordance with the regulations.

Attached is a copy of the signed March 21, 2014 notification letter to the Department of Energy WIPP leaders and a copy of the official public notice of the withdrawal of the draft Permit for the Class 3 modification request.

Environment Secretary Ryan Flynn will make a few brief comments and be available for questions during a media conference call this afternoon at 4 P.M. MT.

MEDIA CONFERENCE CALL INSTRUCTIONS ARE LISTED BELOW:

1. Time: 4:00 P.M. MDT

2. Media participants dial:

Toll-free: 1-888-523-1228

3. When prompted, media participants dial access code ***followed by the # sign.***

Media Participant: 6621103

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