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**ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT ISSUES MODIFICATION TO WASTE ISOLATION  
PILOT PLANT PERMIT**

Santa Fe - On March 13, 2013, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) took final administrative action on a Class 2 permit modification request (PMR) to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Hazardous Waste Facility Permit. NMED has approved the modification with changes regarding the mandatory testing of all mixed waste containers. This permit modification is not related to the recent news regarding the anticipated permit modification request for the Hanford tank waste.

The Department of Energy Carlsbad Field Office and Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC (the Permittees) submitted this Class 2 PMR to the NMED on December 12, 2012 seeking to revise the waste analysis plan waste characterization methods.

NMED did an extensive review of the proposed changes on waste analysis plan waste characterization methods. This included the review of comments submitted during a 60-day public comment period, which began December 19, 2012 and ended February 18, 2013. As a result, NMED included modified language that would require sampling when necessary and appropriate rather than systematic and mandatory testing.

Historical data shows that additional information gained by chemical sampling has not changed a waste stream disposal decision for the waste stream that was sampled. In addition, waste sampling and analysis work is intrusive and risky. Minimizing opening the mixed waste containers in order to minimize the risk of exposure to workers is important.

Environment Department Cabinet Secretary Dave Martin clarified "The permit modification is based on the results of historic testing and has been changed to include a practical and common sense approach to test the waste if there is a reason rather than mandate that every waste stream be tested."

The final permit and the response to comments can be found at:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/wipp/>

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