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FACT SHEET

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

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NM Environment Department's Timeline of Oversight of WIPP Recovery

*"The state's Environment Department has been there since the beginning, and now, we look forward to WIPP's safer operation with their intensified focus on environmental compliance."
--- NM Environment Secretary Butch Tongate*

- February 5, 2014: A diesel powered salt-hauler vehicle caught confident fire in the underground forcing workers to evacuate and operations to cease.
- February 14, 2014, at 11:13 PM: A continuous air monitoring (CAM) alarm in the underground indicated the detection of radiation above background trigger points. A second alarm followed immediately indicating detection of radiation at higher levels. This triggered a switch from exhausting air to the environment to first passing exhaust air (effluent) through a filtration system before exhausting to the environment.
- February 19, 2014: NMED receives first notification of a confirmed release to atmosphere. Gov. Martinez notified who directs Env. Sec. Flynn to immediately travel to Carlsbad upon notification to gather information.
- February 20, 2014: At the insistence of NMED/Martinez Administration, DOE holds first news conference in Carlsbad with DOE CBFO Manager Joe Franco. NMED Sec. Flynn participates. The Department of Energy (DOE) and other sources have confirmed trace amounts of particulate radiation released to the surface and into the atmosphere at the WIPP facility. The release is being monitored by DOE, NMED, and the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring Research Center (CEMRC). The WIPP underground remains shutdown, in concurrence with NMED guidance, as the DOE and others investigate the cause of the event that released radioactive material to the underground, exhaust system, and surface.
- February 27, 2014: NMED issued a [first Administrative Order](#) to DOE prohibiting commencement of normal operations until NMED inspected and approved the facility.
- March 18, 2014: First manned entry into the underground repository performed by DOE inspectors.
- March 21, 2014: [NMED withdrew WIPP's draft Permit for the Class 3 modification](#). This also closed the public comment period for this draft.
- March 26, 2014: NMED requested additional funding for NMED's DOE Oversight Bureau for their sampling and analysis, to independently verify other sampling results.

- April 1, 2014: Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory (LANL) begins shipping TRU waste to Waste Control Specialists in Texas for temporary storage until WIPP reopens.
- April 2, 2014: The first team completed surveys and established a base camp in the underground.
- May 1, 2014: DOE suspends all shipments of LANL TRU Waste.
- May 2, 2014: NMED notified that DOE/LANL made an unauthorized switch of a clay-based kitty litter absorbent to an organic kitty litter absorbent. DOE informs NMED that the organic kitty litter switch is being studied as a contributor to the possible container breach at WIPP.
- May 12, 2014: NMED issued a [second Administrative Order](#) with actions for WIPP to take to ensure continued protection of human health and the environment.
- May 15, 2014: A WIPP underground investigative team takes the first photographs that identify the source of the release as a container of waste generated at LANL.
- May 19, 2014: In response to the visual evidence provided on May 16 and further information reported to NMED, NMED issued a [third Administrative Order](#) to DOE for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The order required DOE/ LANL to develop a LANL Nitrate-Bearing Waste Container Isolation Plan. LANL is required to stay in daily contact with NMED once the plan is approved and implemented. NMED also requires DOE to ensure Waste Control Specialists (WCS) in Texas is taking measures to safeguard and/or isolate the over 100 barrels/TRU waste containers that also have Nitrate Salts combined with organic kitty litter.
- May 20, 2014: NMED issued a [fourth Administrative Order](#) to DOE for WIPP. The focus of this Order was to develop a WIPP Nitrate-Bearing Waste Container Isolation Plan. The Permittees are required to explain the relative safety of the MINO2 waste stream and the other three streams that are described in the same Acceptable Knowledge (AK) document. The order cites 368 total Nitrate Bearing Waste Containers at WIPP: 313 in Panel 6 and 55 in Panel 7, Room 7. NMED orders DOE/WIPP to expedite permanent closure of Panel 6 and the closure of Panel 7, Room 7 after the investigation into the cause of the radiological release is concluded.
- May 21, 2014: An [initial plan was received by NMED](#) from DOE/LANL in response to the third Administrative Order. NMED reviewed the Plan, found it to be deficient in several areas, and submitted comments back to LANL.
- May 23, 2014: NMED approved the DOE/LANL Nitrate-Bearing Waste Container Isolation Plan contingent upon implementation of submitted comments. LANL is monitoring the waste containers on an hourly basis.
- May 30, 2014: The last entry into WIPP before a two to four week halt on underground entries, which concentrated on the first collection of actual samples from Panel 7, Room 7. All prior entries to that room focused on visual inspections only.
- May 30, 2014: [WIPP submits its Nitrate Salt-Bearing Waste Container Isolation Plan to NMED](#) in accordance to instructions from the fourth Administrative Order issued by NMED on May 20, 2014. The plan remains under review.
- June 1, 2014: A two to four week halt on underground entries at WIPP begins. This allowed for filter changes, including removal of contaminated HEPA filters which blocked the outside release of most of the radiological nuclides from the underground.
- June 6, 2014: NMED receives confirmation that the over 100 barrels/TRU Nitrate-Bearing Waste containers at WCS in Texas have been isolated and buried underground. A layer of sand is above the containers to further ensure the containers remain cool and WCS continues to monitor the isolated waste containers.
- June 10, 2014: NMED Secretary Ryan Flynn testifies in front of the Radioactive & Hazardous Materials Interim Committee at the State Capitol. Sec. Flynn reports that DOE/LANL is taking a closer look at six

(6) waste containers that share similar characteristics of having very acidic pH levels inside the containers, along with the Nitrate Salts mixed with organic kitty litter. Those six (6) containers include the one (1) breached container at WIPP and five (5) other containers already in isolation at WCS in Texas.

- April 30, 2015: New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez and Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz [released the terms of a \\$74 million settlement of the State's claims against the Department of Energy \(DOE\)](#) and its contractors related to the February 2014 incidents at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, New Mexico, including the associated activities at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).
- Jan. 22, 2016: New Mexico Environment Department, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and its contractors signed two settlement agreements to [resolve the State of New Mexico Environment Department's claims against DOE](#) and its contractors.
- Dec. 5, 2016: NMED approves Certification of Completion for new Emergency Operations Center at Carlsbad as first completed Supplemental Environmental Project SEP. Eight SEPs were funded by DOE in \$74M settlement of New Mexico claims associated with WIPP events of 2/5/14 and 2/14/14.
- Dec. 16, 2016: New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Hazardous Waste Bureau completed the inspection for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and [transmits results to DOE and its contractor](#). Nuclear Waste Partnership.

<https://www.env.nm.gov/NMED/Issues/WIPP2014.html>

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For your Twitter Feed: As WIPP reopens, "The state's Env Dept been there since the beginning, & now, we look forward to safer operations." <http://bit.ly/2hYZsrj>

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For your Facebook Feed: As WIPP reopens, "The state's Environment Department has been there since the beginning, and now, we look forward to WIPP's safer operation with their intensified focus on environmental compliance," said New Mexico Environment Secretary Butch Tongate. <http://bit.ly/2hYZsrj> #WIPP #NM #NMED

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