



## **NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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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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## **NMED Issues Fact Sheet for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Draft Operating Permit**

*Draft permit enhances accountability, establishes stronger safeguards for New Mexicans*

**SANTA FE** — Today, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) issued a fact sheet summarizing the department's proposed changes to the hazardous waste operating permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) located in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The fact sheet is an initial step in providing the permittees, the Department of Energy and Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC, as well as interested stakeholders and members of the public an understanding of the proposed changes associated with the renewal of the WIPP hazardous waste operating permit.

NMED will release the draft WIPP hazardous waste operating permit on Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022. Once released, NMED will open a 60-day public comment period that will run from Dec. 20, 2022 through Feb. 18, 2023.

"The New Mexico Environment Department is taking a strong stance to protect the health, environment and interests of New Mexicans," said Environment Secretary James Kenney. "The proposed permit changes clearly prioritize DOE's clean-up of legacy contamination in our state while holding the permittees accountable."

NMED is proposing several new conditions in the draft permit, including:

1. Prioritizing the disposal of legacy DOE wastes at WIPP that are generated from New Mexico clean-up activities.
2. Tying WIPP's closure to the end of the permit term (i.e., 10 years after the new permit is issued) unless the permittees can provide an accurate inventory of all remaining wastes awaiting clean-up and emplacement in WIPP.
3. Revoking the permittees state operating permit should the U.S. Congress change the federal Land Withdrawal Act to allow for increased waste emplacement at WIPP.
4. Suspending any and all waste shipments to WIPP if there are allegations or evidence of a threat to human health or the environment.

5. Requiring the DOE to submit a new annual report detailing steps toward siting another geologic repository in a state other than New Mexico.
6. Conducting surveillance of both oil and gas production wells and saltwater disposal wells operating around the perimeter of the facility.
7. Enhancing the public participation process as a permit condition.

The fact sheet released today includes a table summarizing NMED's proposed changes in the draft hazardous waste operating permit.

The WIPP facility was authorized by Congress for the disposal of transuranic (TRU) radioactive waste materials generated by atomic energy defense activities of the United States. WIPP first received a hazardous waste facility Permit from NMED in 1999 to dispose of TRU mixed waste containers 2,150 feet below ground in a geologic repository. The permittees are currently operating the WIPP facility under an expired permit that is administratively extended until a new operating permit is issued. The permittees are seeking authorization for the management, storage, and disposal of TRU mixed waste at the WIPP facility.

The draft permit fact sheet is available in English and Spanish on NMED's WIPP News website at <https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wipp/>. Additional information will be posted to this website on Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022.

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