

**CONCERNED CITIZENS FOR NUCLEAR SAFETY (CCNS)
NUCLEAR WATCH NEW MEXICO (NWNM)
SOUTHWEST RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTER (SRIC)**

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Tom Udall
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Udall and Heinrich:

We write about an urgent matter of worker and public health and safety at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). We request your assistance in having the Department of Energy (DOE) release information about its impending radiation release for review by independent experts and the public before DOE proceeds with the proposed test and ongoing use of the 700C fan.

Our understanding, including from discussions yesterday with the DOE WIPP Site Manager, is that this month DOE is proceeding with a test restart of the 700C fan, which will result in releases of americium and plutonium into the environment. Since the February 2014 radiation release, those 700A, B, and C fans have been shut down to prevent further radiation releases on the surface that would affect workers and the environment. The decision to not use those fans was a wise one from health, safety, and environmental standpoints, as well as not being cost effective.

Our organizations oppose this plan, which is dangerous for workers and the public. DOE has made no public documentation available to justify the test and future use of the fan. That such documentation would be available before the test has been promised for more than three months to our organizations, and to the Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board (DNFSB), Environmental Protection Agency, and New Mexico Environment Department.

The June 5, 2020, DNFSB WIPP Monthly Report stated:

CRESP [Consortium for Risk Evaluation with Stakeholder Participation] provided a set of recommendations including: releasing to the public a report that includes an estimate of a potential radiological release during restart; specifying clear limits in the test plan to determine whether to stop the restart test; assessing the structural and system integrity of the ventilation exhaust ducts prior to restart; periodic monitoring of the radiological conditions of the underground exhaust drift if WIPP decides to operate the 700-C fan for the long term; and ensuring that personal protective equipment is available during the test. Emphasis supplied.

We have told DOE that the report should also include the number of workers underground and on the surface during the test, the plans for independent real-time monitoring, and the cost-benefit study.

We ask you to request such a public report be released and adequate time for independent review before a decision is made and implemented to conduct the 700C fan restart test.

Thank you very much for your consideration and assistance.

Sincerely,
Joni Arends
CCNS

Scott Kovac
NWNM

Don Hancock
SRIC