

## DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

March 5, 2021

**TO:** Christopher J. Roscetti, Technical Director  
**FROM:** Alexander Velazquez-Lozada, Cognizant Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Report for February 2021

**DNFSB Staff Activity.** There were no Board's staff visits to WIPP this month. The staff participated in regular conference calls to maintain cognizance of site activities.

**COVID-19 Response.** Personnel at the WIPP site started vaccinating using a phased approach in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. WIPP continues to monitor staffing levels and meet the minimum requirements to continue operations while maximizing teleworking. During the month of February CBFO increased onsite oversight from 2 to 4 staff members. WIPP paused shipments of Transuranic (TRU) waste to the site in February to support its annual long-term outage. WIPP plans to resume receiving 5 shipments by the end of March with a potential rate increase to 7 shipments per week by April 2021 and 10 shipments per week by May 2021.

**Outage Activities.** Some of the activities scheduled during the outage include inspection of the 800 and 900 series fans including the dampers; the underground supplemental ventilation system; bulkhead inspections; replacement of bulkhead-309; and test and balance of the ventilation systems in the Contact Handled TRU Waste Bay and Room 108 in the Waste Handling Building (WHB). In addition, Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC (NWP), is repairing the Salt Shaft headframe and installing continuous air monitors (CAMs) in Panel 7.

**Underground Ventilation System-700C Fan.** WIPP is currently analyzing the radiological data collected during 700C fan hot test. After evaluating the data, WIPP plans to schedule a public town hall meeting to discuss the results.

**Emergency Preparedness.** In February 23, NWP completed the 2020 annual emergency exercise that was postponed due to COVID-19. WIPP reported that the exercise met most of the objectives. NWP identified opportunities to improve communication between the WIPP Emergency Operations Center and the Joint Information Center. In addition, NWP identified opportunities to improve the emergency response at the Central Monitoring Room. The next annual emergency exercise is scheduled for October 2021.

**Conduct of Operations.** NWP reported a near-miss incident on January 26, 2021, when a roll-up steel door in the Waste Handling Building contacted a caution light on an industrial fork truck causing minor damage to the light. The operator and spotter reported that door opened as normal and that fork truck proceeded through the door. As the fork truck passed beneath the door, the door began to close and contacted the rear portion of the cab causing the door to stop but not before contacting the caution light. The operator immediately stopped the fork truck and notified the supervisor, who notified the Central Monitoring Room. NWP conducted a Fact Finding meeting and a subsequent evaluation indicated that a control switch malfunction caused the door to reverse, rather than stop and stay at the upper limits.