

EPA Actions in Response to Release of Radioactive Material from the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)

Since the release of radioactive material on February 14, 2014 at the WIPP, EPA has been working closely with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) in actively overseeing the actions being taken by the Department of Energy (DOE). Based on the available information, EPA does not believe that the radioactive releases from the WIPP present public health concerns or regulatory compliance issues. However, EPA is in daily communications with DOE and NMED and is taking the following actions to support and provide oversight of the response effort, and provide information for the public:

Review of DOE's Data and Analysis

- **Data analysis and review** – EPA is reviewing data provided by DOE, NMED and the independent Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center (CEMRC) for consistency, completeness and to identify trends or unexpected results. EPA is also conducting a verification and validation of DOE-generated lab data, which will include a review of a representative portion of DOE data.
- **Public dose and dispersion modeling** – EPA is evaluating DOE's plume modeling and dose projections for reasonableness and rigor, and also conducting independent modeling of public dose projections using data supplied by DOE.

EPA Verification and Review of DOE Air Monitoring

- **Independent EPA air monitoring** – EPA's RadNet Monitor in Carlsbad continues to show radionuclide levels at background. Also, within the next 1-2 weeks, EPA plans to deploy 3-4 air samplers at the WIPP facility to validate and verify DOE monitoring. These samplers are expected to be located on-site near existing DOE samplers and will be in place for a limited period of time during DOE's re-entry into the underground. The monitors will provide extra support during re-entry as well as independent verification of DOE's monitoring network. As the incident response progresses, EPA will continue to reevaluate whether additional monitors are needed in the near term.
- **Evaluation of DOE environmental monitoring system** – EPA is evaluating the number and location of DOE's environmental monitors to identify any needed improvements for the future to ensure adequate monitoring is in place should a similar incident occur in the future.

Oversight at the WIPP Site

- **On-site visits and inspections** – EPA plans to continue to conduct site visits, as needed, to oversee DOE's management of the incident including:
 - EPA staff was on-site for an initial incident assessment and to attend public meetings;
 - A more extensive site visit is planned shortly (along with the monitoring described above) to inspect the facility and gather information for EPA's review of DOE's environmental monitoring; EPA will conduct a follow-on site visit(s) to coordinate with DOE's incident investigation and to evaluate potential process improvements;
 - A complete compliance inspection will be conducted at a later date when EPA can have full access to the underground, including the waste panels.

EPA Communications

- EPA will continue to communicate regularly with DOE and the NMED, and will share information with the public on EPA's oversight actions at the WIPP facility through EPA's website and other mechanisms.