

WIPP RADIATION RELEASE
July 28, 2014

SRIC's updates have been less frequent because there is little new data that would help address the long-standing "What we do not know" issues. For those interested in the details of what we know with some confidence, please refer to the most recent detailed Update (July 25, 2014).

The schedule for when more data will be available and when major activities will take place is uncertain. But the following are some of the upcoming events:

Thursday, August 7 - The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) will discuss the results of its sampling at the bi-weekly Carlsbad Town Hall meeting. Each town hall on the first and third Thursdays at 5:30 pm is livestreamed at: <http://new.livestream.com/rvv/> Past town halls are available at: http://www.wipp.energy.gov/wipprecovery/photo_video.html

Tuesday, August 12 – Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Ernest Moniz will visit WIPP.

By August 31 – Laboratory analysis of some underground samples should be released and further sampling will be done in the underground re-entries that are scheduled to be increased to several times a week. The DOE Recovery Plan for WIPP is to be released. The Plan is expected to include cost and schedules for many activities planned in order to re-open the facility for limited waste operations by January 2016. The plan will be posted on the DOE WIPP Recovery website: <http://www.wipp.energy.gov/WIPPR Recovery/Recovery.html>

SRIC and many other organizations and individuals have requested an independent investigation of the WIPP events, the causes, decontamination options, assurance that another release could not occur, how workers that have been or may be contaminated from future activities will be evaluated and treated, among other things.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has established a website with background and current information about the release. <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/NMED/Issues/WIPP2014.html>

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had people temporarily at WIPP and its website provides some information about the release: <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/wipp/index.html>

What we do not know (among many other things)

1. What caused the release.
2. What was the nature of the release that allowed some contaminants to travel more than a mile and a half.

3. What radionuclides in what amounts and what toxic chemicals in what amounts have been released.
4. What contaminants were released into the environment before the HEPA filtration system was triggered.
5. What contaminants in what amounts have been captured by the HEPA filters.
6. What contaminants in what amounts have not been captured by the HEPA filters.
7. Where all the contaminants that were not captured are, whether inside the WIPP boundary or outside the site area.
8. Whether the amount of the release and the location of all of the containments can be determined.
9. When radiation levels in the WIPP underground air will return to pre-release levels.
10. The amounts of contamination in the WIPP underground.
11. What underground decontamination will be done.
12. What amount of exposure to radiation and toxic chemicals the first workers that went underground received.
13. What amount of exposure to radiation and toxic chemicals workers going underground will receive in the future.
14. What amount of exposure that workers on the surface have received.
15. What amount of exposure that workers on the surface will receive in the future.
16. What surface decontamination will be done.
17. What changes in the WIPP facility, operation, monitoring, and safety culture will be implemented.