

STAND AGAINST THE RUSH TO RE-OPEN AN UNSAFE WIPP

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has announced that it intends to re-open the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in December 2016. The nation's only deep geologic repository, located 26 miles east of Carlsbad, has been shut down since February 2014 because of two events – an underground fire and a radiation release.

DOE is in a rush to re-open WIPP even though the facility cannot meet the previous operational and safety standards, let alone more stringent requirements that are necessary to prevent future accidents. The WIPP underground remains contaminated, so operations have to be greatly changed, including workers being dressed in “ebola suits.” Ventilation will not be restored to the pre-2014 levels until 2021 or later – the new system is not designed and how much it will cost is unknown.

The transuranic (plutonium-contaminated) waste from manufacturing nuclear bombs can be in safe storage at the generator sites, so there is no emergency requiring the rush to re-open.

DOE is rushing to re-open WIPP and ALSO wants to expand WIPP to other missions that are prohibited by law, including:

- Greater-Than-Class C waste from dozens of commercial power plants;
- High-level waste from Hanford, WA;
- Commercial waste from West Valley, NY;
- Surplus weapons-grade plutonium from the Savannah River Site, SC.

DOE also is proceeding with finding a “volunteer” site for the nation's high-level defense waste, and some officials in southeastern New Mexico say publicly that WIPP should be that repository!

The 1992 WIPP Land Withdrawal Act explicitly **PROHIBITS all high-level waste, all spent nuclear fuel, and all commercial waste. But DOE wants to ignore the law!**

Those prohibitions resulted from many New Mexicans demanding them!

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Contact Senators Udall and Heinrich (and other elected officials) and ask them to stop the rush to re-open an unsafe WIPP. Ask them to require DOE to drop the expansion proposals and commit that WIPP will not be considered for high-level waste. Ask them to have Congress reiterate that the WIPP law is not being changed to allow those expansions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Southwest Research and Information Center, www.sric.org, 505-262-1862

Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping, contactus@cardnm.org, 505-242-5511

Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, www.nuclearactive.org, 505-986-1973

Nuclear Watch New Mexico, www.nukewatch.org, 505-989-7342