

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BBWI Sends Non-Certified Drum To WIPP

Bechtel BWXT Idaho (BBWI) has informed the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that they shipped a non-certified drum containing transuranic waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), the Department's nuclear waste repository near Carlsbad, N.M. BBWI operates DOE's Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility, located at the DOE's Idaho site, and certifies transuranic waste shipments from that facility to WIPP.

Before drums can be shipped to WIPP they have to be certified according to waste analysis procedures approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and the New Mexico Environment Department. Based on historical records, the drum contained transuranic waste and did not pose any danger to human health or the environment during shipping.

The non-certified drum was mistakenly sent in June and identified this week when BBWI workers discovered that a drum with the identification number of a drum that should have been sent to WIPP earlier was still in storage in Idaho. After cross checking shipping records against a waste tracking database, workers confirmed that the non-certified drum had inadvertently been shipped to WIPP on June 23, 2007.

All shipments to WIPP from the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Facility have been temporarily suspended pending corrective actions by BBWI to ensure appropriate certification before all future shipments to WIPP.

"BBWI takes its compliance responsibility very seriously," said Paul Divjak, BBWI president and general manager. "Following a complete review of the causes of this incident, we will institute appropriate corrective actions to prevent future occurrences."

WIPP is a U.S. Department of Energy facility designed to safely isolate defense-related transuranic waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP, which began waste disposal operations in March 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.

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