



EPA's Continuing Regulation of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

Now that EPA has certified the WIPP, what will EPA do?

EPA will continue to have an oversight role at the WIPP to ensure that it continues to protect human health and the environment. EPA will

Commonly Used Abbreviations:

DOE:	U.S. Department of Energy
EPA:	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
LWA:	WIPP Land Withdrawal Act
WIPP:	Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
QA:	Quality Assurance

- Review and Evaluate DOE Reports

EPA will review new information from DOE to determine whether the certification should be modified, suspended or revoked. DOE is required by regulation to report changes in activities or in conditions that have the potential for any releases, however small. EPA may suspend WIPP certification at the Administrator's discretion, to quickly reverse or mitigate a potential danger to public health. Any decision to modify or revoke certification must be conducted by a rulemaking, including a public comment period.

- Conduct Audits or Inspections at the Waste Generator Sites Before Allowing Waste Shipment

Currently the waste destined for the WIPP is stored at waste sites across the United States. Before the waste can be transported to the WIPP, EPA requires that it be identified or "characterized." Additionally, DOE is required to have in place a system of controls to measure and track important waste components, and to apply quality assurance (QA) measures to its waste identification activities. EPA must separately approve the QA programs and the waste characterization controls for generator sites.

EPA will conduct audits or inspections at waste generator sites to determine if DOE is properly tracking the waste to ensure that it adheres to specified waste component limits. Notices announcing EPA audits or inspections to evaluate quality assurance and waste characterization programs at generator facilities will be published in the *Federal Register*. The public will have the opportunity to submit written comments on DOE's waste characterization and quality assurance program plans, and on other documentation placed in EPA's docket. EPA will use its inspection authority to confirm that DOE is fulfilling all of its commitments related to WIPP. If EPA finds that significant commitments are not being fulfilled (either through independent Agency inspections or required DOE reports), then EPA has the authority to shut down the facility.

EPA must confirm that the waste placed in the WIPP falls within waste limits assumed during

the analysis of the performance of the WIPP. The waste limits are fixed and may only be changed through a modification to the certification. DOE would have to show that the WIPP complies with EPA's containment requirements before any new limits could be established.

- **Conduct Inspections at the WIPP**

EPA may conduct inspections of activities at the WIPP and at other WIPP-related facilities (laboratories, waste generator sites, etc.) to verify continued compliance with EPA's radioactive waste disposal standards. EPA may conduct periodic inspections, both announced and unannounced, and also may inspect any relevant records kept by DOE. EPA will place inspection reports in its docket for public examination.

How long will EPA regulate the WIPP?

As specified in the LWA, EPA will continue to regulate the WIPP until it closes. EPA will conduct a recertification every five years until closure to determine whether the WIPP continues in compliance with EPA's radioactive waste disposal standards.

How can the public continue to participate in EPA's oversight of the WIPP?

As EPA reviews any information, including public input, relevant to WIPP's safety, this information will be placed in EPA's official docket in Washington, DC, and in additional dockets in Carlsbad, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque, NM.

For information on EPA's WIPP activities, call our WIPP Information Line at 1-800-331-WIPP or visit our Website at http://www.epa.gov/radiation/wipp .
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EPA will consider public input as it makes subsequent decisions regarding recertification, approval of waste generator sites for shipment, and any decision to modify, suspend or revoke certification.