

# WIPP Program and Task Force Update

Radioactive & Hazardous Materials Committee

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# 1. Task Force and Program Overview

# The New Mexico Radioactive Waste Consultation Task Force (Task Force)

*The Task Force is a state body that negotiates with the federal government on the siting, licensing, and operation of radioactive waste facilities. It oversees the WIPP Transportation Safety Program to ensure the safe movement of radiological waste in and through New Mexico*

The Task Force is governed by NMSA 1978, Sections 74-4A-6 through 74-4A-8.

Membership Includes:

1. Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
2. Department of Health
3. Environment Department
4. Department of Public Safety
5. Department of Transportation
6. Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
7. Indian Affairs Department
8. State Fire Marshal participates (non-voting member)

# Transportation Safety Program

The program supports the development, and implementation of policies and procedures for the safe transport of radioactive waste.

Key mission areas carried out by the program and its affiliated state agencies include:

1. Keeps the public informed on radioactive materials issues;
2. Monitors and maintains highway safety on NM WIPP shipping routes;
3. Inspects all WIPP shipments at their point of origin or at the NM Ports of Entry; and
4. Supports the planning, training and equipping of response organization along the designated WIPP routes.

# State / Federal Cooperation

- WIPP Program is currently funded under the DOE cooperative agreement DE-EM0005258
- NM/DOE Cooperative Agreements are renewed in 5-year intervals
- The current agreement is valid through 6/30/2027; EMNRD is not anticipating any disruptions to the renewal of this agreement
- DOE is actively supporting responder training in New Mexico and aiding in the development of new instructor cadre within the state



*A worker drives an electric cart through the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, New Mexico.*



## 2. Update on Delayed Training due to Federal Shutdown

# Transuranic (TRU) Waste Inter-site Shipments

- Los Alamos National Labs (LANL) and Lawrence Livermore National Labs (LLNL) have large industrial gloveboxes contaminated with TRU waste
- Size prevents use of Type B containers; the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is seeking special permitting from US DOT to utilize enhanced type A packaging configurations for these large objects.
- Oversized TRU-contaminated gloveboxes and other objects are intended to be shipped to Idaho National Laboratory (INL) and Oakridge National Labs (ORNL) for size-reduction before they can be packaged in type B containers and shipped to WIPP.
- Federal shutdown delayed NNSA's planned briefing of this matter to the Western Interstate Energy Board (WIEB) until June 4, 2026.
- Additionally, the shutdown impacted the availability of DOE led MERRTT training which has since resumed.

# Transuranic (TRU) Waste Inter-site Shipments



Image of a glovebox similar to those at LLNL which are too large for type B packaging





# 3. Training - New Training Initiatives

# Recent Training: DOE's Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training (MERRTT) May 2026

*MERRTT is a 16-hour specialized training program developed by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program (TEPP). MERRTT is specifically designed to teach first responders how to safely respond to transportation accidents involving radiological materials.*

MERRTT training is provided by TEPP and by WIPP contractors.

23 Students trained:

- 11 State Police
- 7 Firefighters
- 5 Emergency Managers

8 Students completed the additional MERRTT Train-the-Trainer instruction. 376 Training hours.



# New Training Initiative: MERRTT

***Starting in FY27, the WIPP Program Manager and Program Coordinator will deliver MERRTT trainings to all 15 MOA jurisdictions, expanding access and frequency to critical hazmat response instruction that protects the lives and health of firefighters and emergency response officers.***

- Lead Training and Exercise Coordinator and Program Manager vacancies recently filled
- Both new staff have received MERRTT instructor qualifications
- Bureau has committed to delivering MERRTT classes to all 15 MOA jurisdictions individually on an annual basis

# Course Development: Equipment Refresher Training

- The bureau has identified the need to develop condensed equipment refresher training
- The goal is to deliver this brief, hands-on training to local response agencies when issuing newly calibrated equipment annually
- This will compliment the MERRTT training by ensuring responders are not only trained in the principals of radiation response, but also on the specific use of the instruments in their department
- The bureau has set a goal of having this course developed by the end of the calendar year





## 4. Training - Standard Training Updates

# WIPP Transportation Exercise (WIPPTREX)

## Purpose of WIPPTREX:

Exercises procedures for response to and recovery from an accident or incident involving a Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) truck transporting transuranic waste to the WIPP site, southeast of Carlsbad, NM.

## Opportunity:

Tribal, Federal, State, Local, and private sector partners to work together in a no-fault, learning environment.



# 2026 Raton / Colfax WIPPTREX by the numbers:

- Occurred March 20 – 21, 2026
- 2 simultaneous locations (Colfax County Event Center & Miners' Colfax Medical Center)
- 87 total attendees and participants (62 unique participants)
- 13 agencies participated (Federal, State, Local, Volunteer, and Private Sector)



# Major Strengths:

Exercise participants work together regularly, and so participants demonstrated:

- clear communication;
- quick set-up of Unified Command, and
- ready delegation of tasks.



## Areas for Improvement:

Increase frequency of trainings due to high emergency responder turnover, to address that:

- this exercise was the first WIPPTREX for more than 75% of exercise participants
- currently, insufficient number of staff are trained to the Technician level.



# Current Training Totals for SFY26

## New Mexico State Police ERO Program Training Summary

- 198 students trained

## Department of Health Training Summary

- 292 students trained

## EMNRD Fire Services Program Training Summary

- 2,917 students trained



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Questions?

