



EM Recovery NEWS FLASH

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Idaho Workers Complete Last of Transuranic Waste Transfers Funded by Recovery Act



Workers prepare a container with transuranic waste for shipment to the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center.

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho – American Recovery and Reinvestment Act workers successfully transferred 130 containers of remote-handled transuranic waste — each weighing up to 15 tons — to a facility for repackaging and shipment to a permanent disposal location.

As part of a project funded by \$90 million from the Recovery Act, the final shipment of the containers from the Materials and Fuels Complex recently arrived at the Idaho Nuclear Technology and Engineering Center (INTEC).

Each of the containers moved to INTEC is shielded and specially designed and fabricated for highly radioactive waste. Once at INTEC, the containers are cut open, emptied, and repackaged. After the waste is removed and put in casks, it is shipped to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico. Workers have completed 44 of 310 shipments of the containers to WIPP. The remaining shipments are on track for completion by September 2015 and will be funded by base program funds.

Transuranic waste consists of materials contaminated with radioactive elements that have atomic numbers greater than uranium, including activated metals and reactor components. The waste is permanently disposed safely at WIPP in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation more than 2,100 feet below the surface.

Processing and shipping remote-handled transuranic waste to WIPP is a key part of the Idaho site's Recovery Act work and in keeping with commitments with the State of Idaho.

At WIPP, workers remove the canisters from the specially designed shipping packages and place them in a large, shielded facility cask, which is transported to the underground disposal area. There, the cask is transferred to equipment that moves the canisters into a borehole, the waste's final disposal location.

As of August 2011, more than 250 cubic meters of remote-handled transuranic waste and more than 76,000 cubic meters of contact-handled waste were disposed at WIPP. Remote-handled waste has a higher dose rate than contact-handled waste.

While remote-handled waste is a small percentage of the total waste disposed at WIPP, its disposal is essential to the cleanup of Cold War legacy waste.

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