

Presentation

Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future

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By

George Mulholland, Ph.D. P.E.

Interim Director CEMRC

Associate Director, IEE – NMSU

Professor Emeritus of Mechanical Engineering - NMSU

The Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center (CEMRC) was established in 1991 with a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The primary goals of the CEMRC are to:

- Establish a permanent center of excellence to anticipate and respond to emerging health and environmental needs.
- Development and implement an independent health and environmental monitoring program in the vicinity of the DOE Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), and make the results easily accessible to all interested parties.

CEMRC is administratively located in the Institute for Energy and the Environment (IEE), a division of the College of Engineering at New Mexico State University (NMSU). Under the terms of the grant from DOE, the design and conduct of research for environmental monitoring at the WIPP are carried out independently of the DOE and the production and release of resulting reports do not require DOE review or approval.

Past public surveys indicated that air monitoring and direct monitoring of people (whole body counting), followed by monitoring of drinking water, were the areas of greatest public interest. While it is highly unlikely that any chemical impacts of the WIPP will be detected through analyses of media other than air and people, CEMRC considers there is value in continued

monitoring of soils, water and sediments, and vegetation and biota in some form and frequency. Thus, a program has been initiated, and will be reviewed yearly and revised, if needed, with input from various stakeholders, in which one of the media other than air and people are sampled each year on a rotating basis.

The continuation of the WIPP EM and new WIPP- related projects reflect the Center's commitment to ensuring that the public, workers, and the environment are protected from exposure to contaminants. It is likely that additional adjustments to the WIPP EM will be needed as the Center's capabilities continue to evolve and the other programs supporting the WIPP also move in new directions.

It is important to note that nuclear waste was first received at WIPP on March 26, 1999. Mixed waste was first received by the WIPP on September 9, 2000, and higher-activity waste (called remote handled or RH waste) was first received at the beginning of 2007.

Based on the radiological analyses of monitoring phase samples (collected since March 26, 1999) completed to data for area residents and for selected aerosols, soils, drinking water and surface water there is no evidence of increased radiological contamination in the region of the WIPP that could be attributed to releases from the WIPP. Levels of radiological and non-radiological analytes measured to date were within the range of levels measured previously by CEMRC for the targeted analytes, and are within the ranges measured by other entities at the State and local levels since before disposal phase operations began in 1999.

I have copies of CEMRC's latest annual report (2009) and a brief description of our activities. Any person desiring a copy of either document, please notify me and I will send a copy to you.