

ENERGY COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE

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Secretary Ernest Moniz
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz,

In light of recent events at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico, the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) urges the US Department of Energy (DOE) to expedite the investigation of the radiation leak to ensure worker and community safety and protection. ECA recognizes the information already provided by DOE and the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center, and efforts to keep the Carlsbad community and State of New Mexico informed. We appreciate the Department's rapid establishment of an Accident Investigation Board, and the creation of a WIPP recovery website with information on recovery efforts, sampling results and radiation. We ask DOE to continue to ensure basic information on the incident, radiation and exposure levels is readily available along with resources for answering any questions from the local community.

As local governments adjacent to and impacted by DOE activities, our most important role is to protect the health, safety, environment, quality of life, as well as economic viability of our communities. WIPP plays a critical role in the cleanup of our communities and the legacy of weapons production and research. Since it became operational in 1999, WIPP has set the standard for safe, permanent disposal of long-lived transuranic (TRU) radioactive defense wastes – receiving without incident 11,872 shipments from across the country, safely disposing of 90,807 cubic meters of waste, and securely placing 170,946 containers in the underground. The WIPP facility has assisted in the remediation of 22 DOE sites of legacy TRU waste since operations began. It is the only facility of its kind.

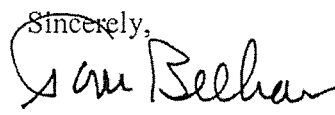
As the investigation into the incident at WIPP on February 14, 2014, continues, ECA asks that DOE analyze what occurred, why it occurred, and what is necessary to safely re-enter the mine, decontaminate it and restart operations as quickly as possible without risk to worker or public safety. DOE should also commit to identifying what the impacts will be if WIPP remains shutdown for the long-term, how the impacts can be mitigated, and what the timeline is for doing so.

To that end, ECA requests that DOE continue to pursue the following actions:

- Host town hall meetings and use multiple formal channels to ensure all impacted local governments and states are regularly informed of current and potential activities.
- Emphasize that the safety response systems in place at WIPP worked as they were designed to contain the release.
- Support the US Environmental Protection Agency to conduct independent tests and studies that can assist and verify monitoring assets already in the area. There should be transparency, and early and full disclosure of any findings to all impacted parties.
- Coordinate with the site contractor (Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC) to analyze exposure to workers on site and address potential health concerns. Status reports regarding health, radiation and exposure should also be provided to the public so there is a clear understanding of what is actually occurring at the site.
- Ensure that other DOE sites understand the impact of the incident on facility operation and DOE's Environmental Management program.
- Work with the New Mexico Environment Department to explore the possibility of extended temporary storage above ground at WIPP beyond changes recently implemented.
- Examine other alternatives for TRU waste management in light of existing cleanup commitments.

Public health and environmental protection are paramount to the success of DOE's cleanup program and trust between the local and federal governments. The safe operation of all DOE facilities is one of ECA's top priorities, one we know we share with you and your colleagues at the Department. We welcome the opportunity to provide any information or assistance we can to help restart normal, safe operations at WIPP and continue cleanup of DOE's nuclear weapon complex.

Please contact Seth Kirshenber at (202) 828-2317 with any questions.

Sincerely,

 Mayor Tom Beehan
 City of Oak Ridge
 ECA Chair

cc: Mayor Dale Janway, Mayor, City of Carlsbad, NM
Chairman Jack Volpato, Eddy County Commission
ECA Board Members
Seth Kirshenberg, ECA Executive Director
David Klaus, Deputy Undersecretary for Management and Performance, US DOE
David Huizenga, Senior Advisor, Office of Environmental Management, US DOE
Frank Marcinowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Waste Management, Office of
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