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For Immediate Release

WIPP Sets Productivity Record

CARLSBAD, N.M., February 14, 2006 – During the week of February 5-11, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) safely received 33 shipments of transuranic waste, the most shipments the plant has received in a single week since the facility opened in 1999. WIPP operations personnel unloaded 97 transportation containers (83 TRUPACT-IIs and 14 HalfPACTs), which contained 392 waste containers.

The 33 shipments represent nearly a 100 percent increase over the maximum number of weekly shipments originally envisioned before the plant opened.

"The important thing to note is that we were able to achieve this while maintaining our excellent safety record," said Dick Raaz, general manager for Washington TRU Solutions (WTS), which manages and operates WIPP for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). "Safety is always our first priority."

The number of shipments that WIPP receives each week has grown from 1-2 shipments in 1999 to an average of 20 shipments per week today.

"We've been able to receive and process more shipments with the same amount of resources through process improvement, innovation and discipline in the way we operate," said Farok Sharif, WTS deputy general manager. "This productivity record is a real testament to the hard work and ingenuity of our employees."

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When WIPP opened, it took approximately 8 1/2 hours to receive and process a waste shipment. Today, it takes WIPP workers about 2 1/2 hours.

WTS has managed WIPP for the DOE for more than 20 years. WTS opened and has safely operated WIPP, the nation's first permanent geologic repository for defense nuclear waste since 1999. Washington Group International, headquartered in Boise, Idaho, is the parent company of WTS.