WE ARE MAKING GREAT PROGRESS ON MANY FRONTS AT WIPP, WITH SAFETY BEING THE CORNERSTONE OF EVERYTHING WE DO. WE CONTINUED TO IMPROVE WIPP’S INFRASTRUCTURE IN 2021. PROJECTS LIKE THE PERMANENT VENTILATION SYSTEM HELP ENSURE WE CAN CARRY OUT WIPP’S CRITICAL NATIONAL DEFENSE MISSION FOR YEARS TO COME. WIPP EMPLOYEES ALSO PERFORMED AT A VERY HIGH LEVEL DESPITE THE MANY CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

— Reinhard Knerr, Manager, Carlsbad Field Office

PROJECTS SPIN UP IN YEAR OF RESURGENCE

Multiple projects slowed by the pandemic spun back up to speed in 2021 and showed visible progress, led by the SSCVS. The SSCVS is the largest containment fan system in the DOE complex and will significantly increase airflow underground. Work on the system’s three major facilities showed major advancements. The foundation for the New Filter Building, where 1,000-horsepower fans will pull air through HEPA filtration, was completed and will significantly increase airflow underground. Work on the system’s three major facilities showed major advancements. The foundation for the New Filter Building, where 1,000-horsepower fans will pull air through HEPA filtration, was completed and will significantly increase airflow underground.

- Completed 97 projects during a two-month-long maintenance outage.
- Completed construction of the Salt Reduction Building, where 1,000-horsepower fans will pull air through HEPA filtration, was completed.
- Completed the initial testing of the 700-C ventilation fan in preparation of its restart.
- Completed multiple infrastructure upgrades including a fire water system.
- Begun mining of the West Access Drifts — an EM 2021 priority.
- Started mining of the West Access Drifts — an EM 2021 priority.
- Completed 97 projects during a two-month-long maintenance outage.
- Transformed waste shipments safely over more than 222,000 cumulative miles; more than 15 million safe miles over the life of the project.
- Received more than 200 TRU waste shipments; more than 23,000 all-time shipments received.

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OVERHAULING AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

WIPP’s aging infrastructure is getting a massive overhaul. A new fire protection system is close to completion, including new 200,000-gallon water tanks, a pump house, and mains. Updated electrical substations above and below ground replace aging equipment. The new equipment provides compressed air for underground airlocks. A new fire protection system is close to completion, including new 200,000-gallon water tanks, a pump house, and mains. Updated electrical substations above and below ground replace aging equipment. The new equipment provides compressed air for underground airlocks. A new fire protection system is close to completion, including new 200,000-gallon water tanks, a pump house, and mains. Updated electrical substations above and below ground replace aging equipment. The new equipment provides compressed air for underground airlocks.

MAINTENANCE OUTAGE COMPLETES 97 PROJECTS

WIPP personnel prioritize maintenance in the form of daily through yearly preventive maintenance checks, and once a year, the most complex projects receive attention over an extended period of time. A two-month-maintenance outage proved productive at the WIPP site as crews completed 97 projects. The largest effort included removing tracks at the waste station 2,150 feet underground. This included regrading the area with gravel and salt. The tracks serve a dual purpose of moving remote-handled waste and materials when they reach the WIPP underground. A double bulkhead that supplies airflow to the station was also replaced, including new ventilation fans.

DURING THE PERIOD, WIPP PERSONNEL EMERGED AS EXPERTS IN MAINTAINING A COMPLEX INFRASTRUCTURE WITHOUT DISRUPTING THE SITE’S OPERATIONS. THE EFFORTS ALLOWED WIPP TO MAINTAIN ITS STATUS AS ONE OF THE LEADING WASTE MANAGEMENT SITES IN THE U.S.

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