

**PRESS RELEASE**

April 28, 2003



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A survey, developed to assess how the environmental officials of all 23 Native American pueblos and reservations in the State of New Mexico perceive the impacts and risks associated with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and its transportation routes, suggests gaps in emergency preparedness programs exist on tribal lands. The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, a transuranic nuclear waste repository, is located in salt deposits 655 m below southeastern New Mexico.

The study, conducted by Environment, Safety, and Risk Associates Corporation (ESRA), a consulting firm based in Delray Beach, Florida, shows 69.56 percent of the 23 environmental officials feel that their tribe is not adequately prepared to deal with the implementation of the WIPP. Although the federal government trains and educates these tribes to manage any WIPP-related radiological hazards or incidents, 34.78 percent of respondents whose tribes live near the WIPP site or its waste transportation routes do not feel they were provided essential training and education. Another 30.43 percent of the respondents report that their tribe lacks adequate equipment to respond to any WIPP-related radiological hazard and that further road improvements for the waste-filled trucks are needed.

The survey results also indicate that 47.83 percent of the tribal officials strongly oppose any high-level waste disposal at the WIPP if Yucca Mountain, the proposed high-level waste repository in Nevada, is rejected or delayed for any reason. Another 69.56 percent of the tribal environmental officials oppose railroad transportation of transuranic wastes to the WIPP.

The survey and report, *Survey Results of Environmental Representatives of all New Mexico Native American Pueblos and Reservations on the Risks Associated with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and its Transuranic Nuclear Waste Transportation Routes*, can be viewed at

<http://www.esracorp.com>

<http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste>