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Before the
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Public Hearing
Walter Gerrells Performing Arts & Exhibition Center
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Session 2

Good afternoon, Vice Chairman Roberson, Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Santos, thank you for the opportunity to discuss WIPP today.

In my view, the most important thing that must occur in order for us to restart operations at WIPP is to re-establish the safety envelope of the facility. I know that in the third session we will discuss actions necessary to begin waste handling in more detail. For this session, I would like to briefly comment on actions necessary to safely recover the underground.

After the events of February 2014, inadequacies in the WIPP safety basis were identified as a result of executing the Department's Unreviewed Safety Question Process as described in the Department's rule 10 CFR 830, *Nuclear Safety Management*. DOE began implementing operational restrictions and compensatory measures at WIPP to ensure controls for confinement of radioactive material continued to protect workers and the public. To compensate for these safety basis inadequacies and allow recovery activities to move forward, the contractor developed and the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) approved a series of temporary safety basis documents called "Evaluations of the Safety of the Situation" (ESS).

Recovery activities have been specifically authorized by CBFO through the ESS process. These included initial re-entry into the underground and other recovery tasks such as ground control in the underground. The CBFO staff, supplemented by DOE Headquarters personnel and others experts from across the complex, perform oversight to ensure the requirements of the ESSs are properly implemented.

As described in the corrective action plans for the accident reports, DOE is taking a number of actions regarding improving the safety culture at WIPP. A safety culture assistance visit at WIPP was conducted, with team members from the commercial nuclear industry, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the DOE complex. The team developed recommendations that both the contractor and CBFO will use to improve the safety culture at WIPP. DOE has also conducted training in leadership for a safety conscious work environment for senior leaders at CBFO and the contractor, and one of the pilot sessions for DOE's first line supervisor course was conducted at Carlsbad.

With that, I look forward to our discussion this afternoon.