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**GOVERNOR RICHARDSON RECRUITS WESTERN GOVERNORS TO DEMAND DOUBLE  
CONTAINMENT FOR TRANSPORTING PLUTONIUM  
UNPRECEDENTED MULTI-STATE ACCORD**

SANTA FE - Governor Bill Richardson has enlisted the support of eight western governors to maintain the safety of WIPP shipments throughout the west.

The eight governors signed a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, asking the NRC to reconsider its recent decision to change regulations regarding the transportation of plutonium. A weakening of these regulations is scheduled to go into effect in October.

“We believe that the NRC has not adequately addressed our objections, as stated in our letter, to the proposed rule change including concerns related to terrorism, public confidence in shipments and the need for NRC to provide compelling scientific and technical analysis to justify any proposal to relax these plutonium packaging standards,” the Governors wrote in a March 11 letter to Nils J. Diaz, chairman of the NRC.

The current regulation requires that plutonium in excess of 20 curies per package must be double contained, but the change approved by the NRC would eliminate this requirement. Double containment such as that provided by the TRUPACT II, currently used for shipping waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in southern New Mexico, provides an extra layer of protection against a possible radiation release in the event of a shipping accident.

Governor Richardson is a very strong advocate for WIPP transportation safety, which would be directly affected by this change in regulation. The Radioactive Waste

Consultation Task Force, chaired by New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Secretary Joanna Prukop, oversees New Mexico's WIPP Transportation Safety Program.

All waste headed for WIPP, located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad, is primarily contaminated by plutonium and is currently subject to the double containment requirement that is scheduled to be deleted on October 1, 2004. The governors of Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming joined New Mexico to object to the relaxation of regulations governing the transportation of plutonium.

In addition to these concerns, the governors argue that key technical comments such as those submitted by the Environmental Evaluation Group (EEG) during the comment period were not considered by the NRC and that the Commission based its decision upon incomplete information.

For more information on WIPP Transportation, visit [www.emnrd.state.nm.us](http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us) <<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us>> and click on Waste Isolation Project on the menu on the left.

For more information on the Environmental Evaluation Group's technical reasoning for objecting to the deletion of the double containment requirement, Section 71.63(b), from NRC Regulation 10CFR71, Packaging and Transportation of Radioactive Material, please refer to "EEG-89, A Rationale for Maintaining the Double Containment Requirement for Plutonium Shipments," available on EEG's Web site at: [www.eeg.org/EEGsite.nsf/EEG89?OpenPage](http://www.eeg.org/EEGsite.nsf/EEG89?OpenPage) <<http://www.eeg.org/EEGsite.nsf/EEG89?OpenPage>>.

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