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SANTA FE –The New Mexico Environment Department acknowledged their role in ensuring a safe reopening of the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, while recognizing the first emplacement of transuranic waste into the underground repository.

A press release addressing the reopening was sent out to media groups Jan. 4.

Following a fire and separate radiological event that closed the facility in February 2014, the New Mexico Environment Department began a comprehensive investigation, and led efforts to hold the DOE accountable.

Today's waste emplacement marks the first waste to be disposed of in the WIPP underground since the 2014 incidents.

"This is a big step in the right direction. For nearly three years, we have held the federal government accountable and ensured that they implemented the corrective actions prescribed. These activities were successful and allowed us to give the green light to open it back up," New Mexico Environment Secretary Butch Tongate said. "As we move forward, we're going to continue to closely monitor operations at WIPP to ensure a safe reopening of this critical facility which is so important to our state and to our nation's security.

"At every step of the way during the recovery, the New Mexico Environment Department was

there, Tongate added. “The road ahead includes stronger safety practices, more robust emergency response capabilities, safer transportation routes, and a better facility for our nation, and for all New Mexicans, especially the WIPP workforce.”