**Integration Group for the Safety Case (IGSC) Symposium 2024***MOVING TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SAFE DGR – GETTING REAL*

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| **Abstract Title:**  Stakeholder Interaction: Lessons Learned by the New Mexico Environment Department, USA, State Regulator of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, author: Megan McLean, Megan.McLean@env.nm.gov | |
| **Abstract (300-500 words):**  The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is one of the regulatory agencies that oversees the U.S. Department of Energy’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The WIPP facility is located approximately 26 miles east of Carlsbad, New Mexico, USA in a remote desert area. WIPP is a deep geologic repository mined 2,150 feet underground within a bedded salt formation.  The Department of Energy owns the WIPP facility and manages it along with its management and operating contractor (together, the WIPP permittees, i.e. the implementer). WIPP is a hazardous waste facility currently operating under a permit issued by NMED authorizing the management, storage, and disposal of transuranic mixed waste at the facility. Mixed waste is radioactive waste that has a hazardous waste component and is thus subject to regulation by NMED.  Collaboration with stakeholders through public processes is a critical aspect of environmental permitting. Both the WIPP permittees and NMED as the regulatory agency have public notification requirements based on the types of proposed actions at the facility or for modifications made to the permit. In addition to these requirements, NMED has developed a strong public involvement plan that extends public outreach and works to ensure Spanish-speaking individuals have access to the process. This public involvement plan was recently adopted by the WIPP permittees at the request of stakeholders.  NMED regularly communicates with stakeholders who are both in favor of the facility and those who are generally against the facility operating beyond its originally envisioned timeframe. NMED has extensive experience drafting and giving testimony in public hearings and responding to public comments for actions proposed by the WIPP permittees. NMED also has extensive experience in mediating between pro and against stakeholders and the WIPP permittees in formal negotiations, which have twice resulted in withdrawal of hearing requests, negating the need for this time-consuming and expensive process.  The author will speak on aspects of stakeholder and permittee engagement at a nuclear facility, both in regard to regulatory-required public outreach and the benefits of regularly engaging with stakeholders and permittees to develop strong working relationships. This not only benefits stakeholders and the regulated entity but reduces conflict to enable the regulator the ability to handle a demanding workload. | |