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For Immediate Release*

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DOE Reports on Status of Surface-Based Drilling and Underground Testing Programs

At the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board's (the Board) fall meeting on October 19-20, 1993, in Las Vegas, Nevada, Board members will review the progress of the Department of Energy's (DOE) surface-based drilling program and plans for underground testing at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The two-day meeting, which will begin at 8:30 A.M. on both days and is open to the public, will be held at the Plaza-Suites Hotel, 4255 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109; telephone (702) 369-4400.

On Tuesday, October 19, the Board is interested in hearing from the DOE and its contractors about the status of the surface-based dry drilling program, including its integration with the underground testing program and the need to either reduce core requirements or increase core production rates. Representatives from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) will discuss their concerns about current controls on the design of the exploratory studies facility. The Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office also will make a presentation on its concerns about the potential effects tunneling at Yucca Mountain may have on efforts to gather data from surface-drilled boreholes on the movement of gases through the rock. In the afternoon, the Board will be briefed on current surface-based testing programs, including Nye County's cooperative drilling program.

On Wednesday, October 20, presentations before the Board will focus on the DOE's plans for underground testing in the exploratory facility. Topics include planned tests and test locations, testing in the Calico Hills unit under the proposed repository horizon, and the status of thermal tests. Both days will close with round-table discussions.

The Board was created by Congress in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987 to evaluate the technical and scientific activities undertaken by the DOE in its program to manage the disposal of the nation's spent fuel and defense high-level waste. In that same legislation, Congress directed the DOE to characterize a site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for its suitability as a potential location for a permanent repository for disposing of that waste.

Transcripts of this meeting will be available on a library-loan basis from Victoria Reich, Board librarian, beginning December 1, 1993.