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Energy Secretary Orders Supplemental 30-Day Comment Period on Yucca Mountain Project

Two Key Milestones Reached in Yucca Mountain Site Suitability Characterization Process

Washington - U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham today ordered the Department of Energy to conduct a supplemental 30-day comment period to provide Nevada's citizens additional opportunities to comment on the Yucca Mountain Project. The 30-day comment period opened on Wednesday, November 14, 2001 and will close on December 14, 2001.

"As I made clear at the Department's hearings in September this year and as I have told Nevada officials, I am committed to providing Nevada's citizens additional public involvement opportunities to comment on the Yucca Mountain Project. This 30-day comment period keeps that commitment to the citizens of Nevada," Abraham said.

In addition, the Department announced today that two key milestones were reached in the site characterization process: the release of the Yucca Mountain Site Suitability Guidelines and sufficiency comments released by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The purpose of the comment period is to provide citizens an opportunity to comment on issues that could not have been raised prior to the close of the previous comment period on October 19. Since October 19, various government agencies have released documents relevant to the Yucca site characterization process, including,

- * The Department of Energy's Final Site Suitability Guidelines
- * The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Final Yucca Mountain Repository Licensing Guidelines
- * The Nuclear Regulatory Commission "Sufficiency Letter."

The Yucca Mountain Site Suitability Guidelines (10 CFR 963) provide the criteria that will guide the Department in determining the suitability of the Yucca Mountain site for further development as a potential geological repository and reflect 20 years of scientific work at the Yucca Mountain Project. The guidelines are consistent with recently finalized, site-specific regulations from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on the safe disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

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The NRC is the federal regulatory body that must approve the construction and operation of a repository at Yucca Mountain. The "Sufficiency Letter" indicates that NRC believes sufficient information will exist to begin a potential licensing review should DOE submit a license application, based upon an analysis of the Department's existing site characterization activities and the completion of an agreed-upon course of additional work to be done to develop the license application.

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