

Protecting Public Health and Safety at the Proposed Geologic Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada: Roles of Federal Agencies

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION (NRC)

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is an independent regulatory agency. Its mission is to ensure that public health, safety, and the environment are protected when nuclear materials are used. The NRC also sees to it that nuclear materials are used in a manner that is consistent with the nation's responsibilities to provide for the common defense and security. The NRC will determine whether to issue a license to the Department of Energy (DOE) to construct, and later operate, a proposed repository at Yucca Mountain for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. The NRC will issue a license to DOE only if DOE can demonstrate that it can construct and operate a repository safely and in compliance with NRC's regulations. The NRC is also responsible for licensing the design, construction, use, and maintenance of any shipping casks that may be used to move commercial waste by truck or rail to Yucca Mountain.

NRC licensees bear the primary responsibility for the safe use of nuclear materials. Federal regulations and the NRC regulatory program are important elements in assuring protection of the public and the environment. NRC fulfills its responsibilities to regulate the disposal of high-level radioactive waste through a system of licensing and regulatory activities that includes

- Developing and enforcing rules and regulations so that licensed nuclear activities are conducted safely
- Granting or denying licenses for the construction, operation, and closure of any geologic repository for high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel to assure the public is protected
- Inspecting licensed facilities and activities to monitor compliance with the regulations
- Conducting research to provide independent expertise for addressing safety concerns
- Investigating nuclear incidents and allegations to assure the facts are known and that appropriate corrective measures are taken
- Enforcing NRC regulations and conditions (i.e., restrictions) placed on NRC licenses
- Maintaining the NRC Incident Response Program, including the NRC Operations Center, to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies
- Maintaining interactions with State, Tribal, and Local regulatory authorities

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

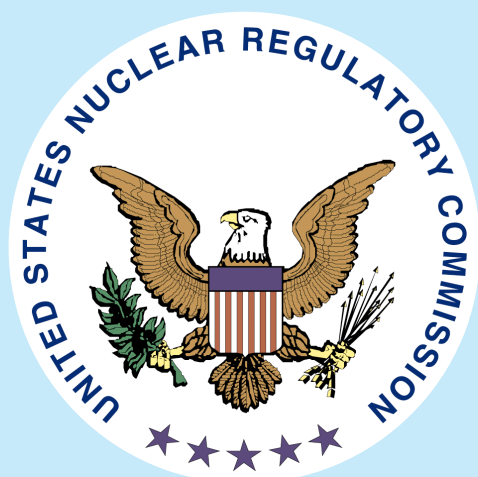
The Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for developing site-specific standards for Yucca Mountain, Nevada. These standards will be designed to protect public health and the environment from exposure to the radioactive waste that may be stored at the proposed underground geologic repository. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is responsible for establishing and enforcing regulations that implement the standards developed by EPA. More information about EPA and its role in the geologic disposal of high-level radioactive waste can be found at the EPA website: <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/yucca>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE)

The Department of Energy is responsible for characterizing and, if authorized to do so, designing, constructing, and operating a possible repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The DOE is studying Yucca Mountain, Nevada, to determine if it is a suitable place to build a geologic repository for the Nation's commercial and defense spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. More information about DOE and its role in the geologic disposal of high-level radioactive waste can be found at two DOE websites: <http://www.doe.gov> and <http://www.ymp.gov>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT)

If Yucca Mountain is licensed by NRC to receive waste for disposal in the proposed repository, the Department of Transportation would be responsible for ensuring that waste carriers comply with national regulations governing the shippers and carriers of radioactive material. These regulations also cover conditions of transport, routing, vehicle suitability, driver qualification, handling, and storage in the transit. More information about DOT and its role in the transport of radioactive waste can be found at the DOT website: <http://www.dot.gov>.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information on public involvement, contact the NRC Office of Public Affairs by telephone at 301-415-8200, via email at OPA@NRC.GOV, on the Internet at <http://www.nrc.gov>, or by U.S. Mail at U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001.

For detailed descriptions of how to obtain information from the NRC, you can order a copy of the "Citizen's Guide to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Information," NUREG/BR-0010, by writing the Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 37082, Washington, D.C. 20013-7082, or calling 202-512-2249.

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