United States Department of Energy

Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20585

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 19, 2007

The U.S. Department of Energy Moves Forward with Release of Final Performance Requirements for Canister System

Washington, D.C**.** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced the release of final performance requirements for the Transportation, Aging and Disposal (TAD) canister for disposal of spent nuclear fuel at a repository to be located at Yucca Mountain in Nye County, Nevada. This canister approach will minimize the need for repetitive handling of spent nuclear fuel by using the same canister from the time it leaves a nuclear power plant to its placement in a waste disposal package at Yucca Mountain.

"This is one more step in moving the Yucca Mountain Project forward to submit the License Application," said Edward Sproat, Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM). "We are strongly encouraged by what we have seen so far in the proof-of-concept design phase."

DOE will shortly initiate procurement for the development of final TAD canister and cask designs. DOE also plans to enter into discussions with nuclear utilities to amend their disposal contracts with DOE to facilitate the use of TAD canisters. DOE anticipates that TAD canisters will be available for commercial use as early as 2011 and expects that up to 90 percent of commercial spent nuclear fuel could be placed in TAD canisters, resulting in the need for about 7,500 TAD canisters for the proposed repository.

In November 2006, DOE released the preliminary TAD performance specification followed by a proof-of-concept phase that resulted in the development of designs by four cask vendors. The TAD-based approach, announced in October 2005, eliminates the need for the construction of several multi-million square foot, multi-billion dollar facilities for handling spent fuel at the Yucca Mountain repository.

Yucca Mountain was approved by the Congress and the President as the site for the nation's first permanent spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste geologic repository in 2002. In March 2007 DOE submitted legislation to Congress to enhance the nation's ability to manage and dispose of commercial spent nuclear fuel and Defense high-level radioactive waste. The Department's license application for authorization to construct the repository, which is scheduled to be submitted to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission on or before June 30, 2008, will incorporate the TAD approach. The final TAD requirements are available on the OCRWM website under "WHAT'S NEW' at www.ocrwm.doe.gov.

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YMP-07-06