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DOE Releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement For Potential Repository at Yucca Mountain

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the potential repository at Yucca Mountain in Nye County, Nevada.

"This Draft EIS considers the possible environmental impacts that may result from the construction, operation and monitoring, and eventual closure of a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. The Draft EIS also evaluates the possible impacts of transporting spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste to Yucca Mountain, as well as the possible impacts of not developing a geologic repository and continuing to store these materials at commercial and DOE sites," said Lake Barrett, acting director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. "The EIS will be important to any future decision on whether to recommend the site for development."

The Department of Energy is conducting scientific and technical work at Yucca Mountain to determine whether or not the site is suitable for a geologic repository. A decision on whether or not to recommend the site as a repository is currently scheduled to be made in 2001. If the Yucca Mountain site is found suitable and is recommended for development as a geologic repository by the Secretary of Energy, the President and the Congress would have to approve development of the site before work could proceed. In that case, DOE would then submit a license application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). If the NRC grants the licenses to proceed with the construction and operation of a monitored geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, emplacement of radioactive materials could begin in 2010.

Comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted during a 180-day public comment period, which will begin on August 13, 1999 and end on February 9, 2000. DOE will consider comments received after this period to the extent practicable. Comments may be submitted by mail to Wendy R. Dixon, EIS Project Manager, M/S 010, U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office, P.O. Box 30307, North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307. Comments can also be faxed to 1-800/967-0739 or submitted over the Internet via the Yucca Mountain Project web site at <http://www.ymp.gov>.

DOE will conduct 16 public hearings during the public comment period. There will be six regional hearings (Washington, DC; Boise, ID; Denver, CO; Atlanta, GA; Salt Lake City, UT; and St. Louis, MO), nine within the state of Nevada (Pahrump, Goldfield, Caliente, Las Vegas, Reno, Austin, Crescent Valley, Amargosa Valley, and Ely), and one in California (Lone Pine). These hearings will provide an opportunity for the public to submit comments for the record. Hearings will include a brief overview of the Draft EIS and a question and answer session. DOE will publish the dates, times, and specific locations of the public hearings in the Federal Register and appropriate local news media, and will notify all recipients of the Draft EIS and the media in writing as soon as this information is available. In addition, this information will be available on the Yucca Mountain web site at <http://www.ymp.gov> and through the toll-free information line at 1-800/967-3477.

On August 6, 1999, the Draft EIS will be available via the Internet web site. Copies of the Draft EIS Summary or the complete Draft EIS (on CD-ROM or paper) may also be requested by calling the toll-free information line. The Draft EIS will also be available for review at 38 public reading rooms across the country. Names and locations of these reading rooms are available via the Internet or the toll-free information line.

Note to reporters and editors: A copy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is available by calling 202/586-5806.