

Program Profile

Statutory Authorities and Mission

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (Public Law 97-425) established the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) within the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) to develop and manage a Federal system for disposing of all spent nuclear fuel from commercial nuclear reactors and high-level radioactive waste resulting from atomic energy defense activities. The statute provides detailed direction for the scientific, technical, and institutional development of the system, and it requires that waste management facilities be licensed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

Under the Act, commercial spent nuclear fuel is to be permanently emplaced in a deep geologic repository. In 1985, under provisions of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, the President determined that a separate repository for high-level radioactive waste from atomic energy defense activities would not be required; they could be disposed of along with commercial spent nuclear fuel in the civilian repository. The Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-203) directed the Secretary of Energy to characterize only the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada to determine if it is suitable for a repository. Under OCRWM's current schedule, waste emplacement at the repository would begin in 2010.

The Act authorized the Secretary to enter into contracts with the generators and owners of commercial spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste, for acceptance of legal title to the waste, subsequent transportation, and disposal. A *Standard Contract for Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and/or High-Level Radioactive Waste* was promulgated in 1983 in 10 CFR Part 961. Individual contracts based on the *Standard Contract* have been executed between the Department and those parties. The Act also directs OCRWM to develop a nationwide system for transporting commercial spent nuclear fuel to Federal facilities.

OCRWM's Fiscal Year 1997 activities were governed by its May 1996 draft revised *Program Plan. A Total System Description*, issued in June 1997, provides a top-level description of the waste management system OCRWM is developing.

Section 304(c) of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act requires OCRWM's Director to submit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the activities and expenditures of the Office. This Annual Report, the 14th, covers the period from October 1, 1996, through September 30, 1997.

Funding Sources and Budget

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 provides that the costs of disposing of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste are to be borne by the parties responsible for their generation. Fees levied on the owners and generators of commercial spent nuclear fuel are defined in the *Standard Contract*. The fees are deposited in the Nuclear Waste Fund, a separate account in the U.S. Treasury that is managed and administered by DOE. OCRWM can only expend monies from the Fund that are appropriated by Congress. Amounts not appropriated for current expenses are invested in U.S. Treasury securities and managed strategically to ensure that the long-term costs of waste disposal can be met.

The Act directed that if civilian and defense wastes are emplaced in the same repository, each party must pay its proportional share of costs. The Department developed a methodology for allocating civilian and defense costs and published the result in the *Federal Register* in August 1987. Funding to meet the costs of disposing of defense wastes in the repository is provided through a Defense Nuclear Waste Disposal Appropriation from the general (taxpayer-supported) fund of the U.S. Treasury. Those costs are currently estimated to be about 20 percent of total costs. The combined Fiscal Year 1997 civilian and defense appropriation for the program was \$382 million.

Program Organization

OCRWM is headquartered in Washington, D.C., in the Department of Energy's Forrestal Building. Its Director reports to the Secretary through the Deputy Secretary. OCRWM carries out its mission through two business centers, or projects, and a management center:

- The Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Project is located in Las Vegas, Nevada. It is responsible for all work leading up to and including licensing of a geologic repository.
- The Waste Acceptance, Storage and Transportation Project is located at OCRWM headquarters. It is responsible for all work leading up to and including acceptance, storage, and transportation of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.
- The Program Management Center, also located at OCRWM headquarters, consists of the Office of Program Management and Administration, and the Office of Quality Assurance. It supports the two business centers and the OCRWM Director.

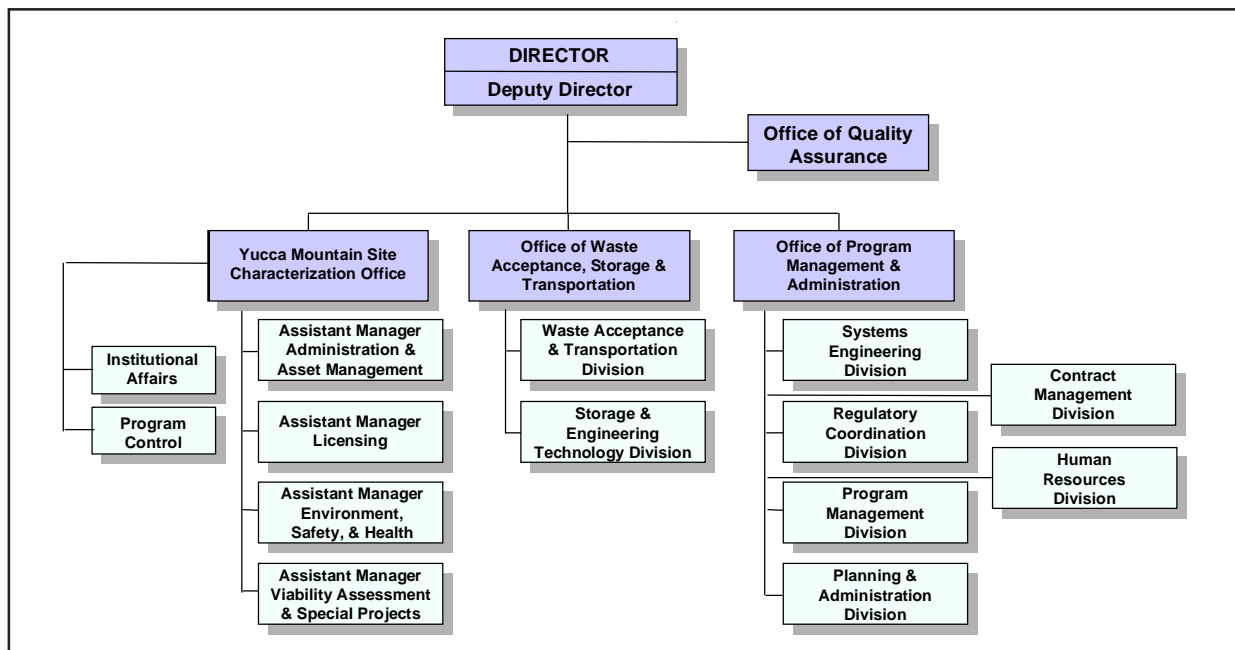
In Fiscal Year 1997, OCRWM's Federal staff numbered 202 full-time equivalents, with 106 positions at

headquarters and 96 at the Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Project. Of the positions at headquarters, 29 were assigned to the Waste Acceptance, Storage and Transportation Project.

Clarification of Terms

In this report, we most often use the term *high-level radioactive waste* narrowly to refer to the wastes that result from reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. These wastes are Government-managed. Technically, the term also encompasses all wastes with high levels of radioactivity, and in a few instances we use the term inclusively. We use *Government-managed nuclear materials/wastes* to refer to all materials destined for geologic disposal other than commercial spent nuclear fuel. *DOE spent nuclear fuel* includes spent nuclear fuel generated by DOE and spent nuclear fuel irradiated in commercial reactors but now managed by DOE; the latter category includes foreign research reactor fuel.

Because the Nuclear Waste Policy Act refers to *high-level radioactive waste resulting from atomic energy activities* and the Defense Nuclear Waste Disposal Appropriation applies to *defense nuclear waste*, when we are discussing the Act and the appropriation, we sometimes use these terms. Overall, we trust that the context in which terms are used will clarify them for the reader.



OCRWM Organization Chart