



NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:
Joe Davis, 202/586-4940
Brian Wilkes, 202/586-7371

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, June 2, 2003

Modern Pit Facility Draft Environmental Impact Statement Issued

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for a plutonium production facility was released today by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

The draft EIS for the Modern Pit Facility (MPF) evaluates reasonable alternatives for manufacturing plutonium pits to support the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile. It will provide a basis for Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham to make a record of decision on or before April 2004 on whether to proceed with a MPF, and if so, where to locate the facility.

The United States was, until recently, the only nuclear power without the capability to manufacture plutonium pits. In 1989, pit production was shut down at the Rocky Flats plant. Last month, Los Alamos National Laboratory announced it had manufactured the first W88 pit that could be used to maintain our current stockpile. However, the lack of a permanent plutonium pit production facility is a critical issue in defense readiness that has been identified by a variety of sources as a national security issue that needs immediate attention, including by the administration in the Nuclear Posture Review, by Congress and the Department of Defense, and by outside experts.

Secretary Abraham said, "This issue is an important one since it deals directly with the national security of the U.S. and our ability to keep our nuclear stockpile safe, reliable and secure."

If Secretary Abraham decides to proceed with a MPF, the new facility will reestablish the capability to manufacture current and future pit types for the nuclear stockpile by 2020, in an environmentally compliant manner.

The five locations for a MPF are evaluated in the draft EIS: (1) Los Alamos Site, New Mexico; (2) Nevada Test Site; (3) Carlsbad Site, New Mexico; (4) Savannah River Site, South Carolina; and (5) Pantex Site, Texas. The draft EIS also evaluates the alternative of upgrading the existing plutonium fabrication facility at Los Alamos, and a "no action" alternative of not proceeding with a MPF. The preferred alternative in this draft EIS is to construct and operate a MPF. A preferred site for the MPF will be identified in the final EIS.

NNSA is inviting comments related to the draft EIS. Public comments should be submitted within 60 days and can be mailed to the MPF EIS Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy/NNSA, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585. Comments may also be faxed to 202-586-5324, or submitted via the MPF EIS web page (<http://www.mpfeis.com/>).

Public meetings to receive comments on the draft EIS will be held by the NNSA in the vicinity of the site alternatives, as well as in Washington, D.C. The public meetings will provide the public with an opportunity to present comments and ask questions regarding the MPF EIS.

The locations, dates, and times for the public meetings are as follows:

Pantex Site -- June 26, 2003

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

College Union Building, Oak Room
Amarillo College, Washington St. Campus
24th and Jackson Streets
Amarillo, TX 79178
(806) 371-5100

Carlsbad Site, NM -- June 30, 2002

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Area Office
4021 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220
(505) 234-7227

Los Alamos Site -- July 1, 2003

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Cities of Gold Hotel
Highway 84/285
Pojoaque, NM 87544
(505) 455-0515

Nevada Site -- July 2, 2003

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

University of Nevada Las Vegas
4504 Maryland Parkway
Student Union Building
Room 201
Las Vegas, NV 89154
(702) 895-4449

Savannah River Site -- July 7, 2003

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

North Augusta Community Center
495 Brookside Avenue
North Augusta, SC 29841
(803) 441-4290

Washington, D.C. -- July 16, 2003

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1E-245
Washington, DC 20585
(202) 586-0821

-DOE-