



United States Department of Energy

## **Office of Public Affairs**

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# **Secretary of Energy Expands Public Input Process To Provide Nevada Citizens Increased Opportunities To Comment on Yucca Mountain Project**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham announced today that he will go well beyond what the law requires and beyond the process contemplated by previous Administrations to expand the public input process by providing Nevada citizens reasonable opportunities to participate in the public comment process.

Abraham said, "The views and the comments of Nevada citizens on this issue are very important. I have received requests advocating many different actions for addressing Yucca Mountain from both proponents and opponents. My goal is to ensure a fair and impartial process. Moreover, we have taken steps well beyond what the law requires involving the public and beyond what had been planned prior to this Administration's taking office, and we will continue to do so.

"At my direction, Under Secretary Robert Card attended the recent public hearing held in Las Vegas. I had asked him to report personally to me both on the views expressed by citizens of Nevada and on steps that could be taken to ensure Nevada citizens are afforded unfiltered and comprehensive opportunities to share their views on Yucca Mountain. Under Secretary Card offered a series of recommendations to increase opportunity for public involvement, and I have directed the Department of Energy to move forward on those recommendations, the first phase of which is announced today."

"First, ensuring our commitment to the citizens of Amargosa Valley and Pahrump, we have rescheduled our hearings postponed due to the terrorist attacks on the United States," Abraham said. Specific dates, locations and times for the Amargosa Valley and Pahrump hearings are:

- Monday, September 24, 2001  
Longstreet Casino,  
Amargosa Valley, Nevada,  
2:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Poster Session;  
3:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Hearing.

- Monday, September 24, 2001  
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall #10054,  
4651 Homestead Road,  
Pahrump, Nevada,  
2:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Poster Session;  
3:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Hearing.

"Each hearing will begin with a poster session of facilities, research, and other items for citizens to review. The public participation and comment period will begin promptly at 3:00 p.m. and run until 9:00 p.m., or until all citizens wishing to comment are heard.

"Time for public comment and the availability of experts to answer substantive questions during the poster session has been expanded to provide the public wishing to participate flexible hours to do so.

"Second, to further increase opportunities for citizens to offer their comments and to provide for greater public involvement, the Department will also hold additional public meetings this year, at each of which I or senior members of my team, including Deputy Secretary Frank Blake, Undersecretary Robert Card, and other appointed officials at the Department of Energy will attend.

"Third, at specific times and dates to be announced, the Department will station a DOE official at the Yucca Mountain Science Center in Las Vegas to receive public input.

"Finally, as Under Secretary Card continues to monitor the progress of the public comment process, we will determine additional steps that accomplish the goal of providing reasonable opportunities to participate in the public comment process.

"In just the last five years, the Department has made available over 2000 documents, held 39 public hearings, afforded nearly 400 days of public comment periods, and received almost 20,000 public comments on topics related to the Yucca Mountain site.

"The current comment period for Yucca Mountain opened May 4th, 2001. The Department has extended that comment period to October 5th, 2001, providing Nevada citizens more time to register their remarks.

"In addition, at the request of the Nevada congressional delegation, the Department arranged live video teleconference links tied-in to the Las Vegas hearing from Carson City, Elko, and Reno, Nevada. The Department also arranged for a direct live-satellite link allowing members of the Nevada Congressional delegation, who did not attend the hearing, to provide comment from Washington, D.C.," Abraham said.

The attendance figures for the remote teleconference sites, as well as the Las Vegas hearing, are as follows:

**Las Vegas, Nevada**

Approximately 450 people in attendance (based on registration and seating capacity)  
132 registered to comment, 105 commented before the panel or the off-line court reporter

**Reno, Nevada**

28 people in attendance, 7 commented

**Carson City, Nevada**

55 people in attendance, 7 commented

**Elko, Nevada**

15 people in attendance, 8 commented

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