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For Immediate Release:

October 20, 2009

**Low Levels of Tritium Detected in Groundwater
on Federal Land Near the Nevada Test Site
*Sample Levels Are Below Federal Drinking Standards;
14 Miles from Nearest Public Water Source; Consistent with Model Predictions***

Groundwater sampling of a recently completed well (ER-EC-11) drilled on U.S. Air Force land adjacent to the Nevada Test Site has confirmed the presence of tritium at approximately 12,500 picocuries per liter -- below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Safe Drinking Water Act standard of 20,000 picocuries per liter. The sample results were verified by a certified independent laboratory and reported to the State of Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP). NDEP was regularly apprised of drilling status and sampling results throughout the well construction process in September and October.

The detection of radioactivity is consistent with model predictions released in a February 2009 U.S. Department of Energy document. The February 2009 document is a focused refinement of the original October 1997 report which predicted that groundwater contamination would migrate beyond the Nevada Test Site boundary to adjacent U.S. Air Force land near Pahute Mesa. The nearest public water source to the well is approximately fourteen (14) miles.

The ER-EC-11 well was completed the week of October 12. Current plans are to drill six more wells on and near Pahute Mesa over the next two to three years. These wells will be drilled as part of the U.S. Department of Energy's extensive groundwater characterization program at an average depth of 3,500 feet and at a cost of approximately \$5 million each.

The groundwater characterization program encompasses well drilling; sample collection, analysis and evaluation; and computer modeling to better determine the nature and extent of groundwater contamination. The nearest underground test locations to well ER-EC-11 (approximately two miles) are Benham and Tybo, detonated in 1968 and 1975, respectively.

The recent sampling results are in accordance with the Pahute Mesa computer model predicting migration of tritium off the Nevada Test Site within 50 years of the first nuclear detonation on Western Pahute Mesa which occurred in 1966.

NSO-09-10

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The U.S. Department of Energy planned this most recent drilling campaign in conjunction with the NDEP and the Community Advisory Board for Nevada Test Site Programs to enhance existing knowledge of groundwater location and movement through the acquisition of needed data. This data supplements the data gathered from the existing network of more than 140 water sources (wells, springs, and surface waters) on and around the Nevada Test Site.

NSO-09-10

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