



ROLE OF THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION (NRC) IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR YUCCA MOUNTAIN, NEVADA

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) ?

- Full and fair review of significant environmental effects of a proposed action.
- Means to inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable choices to minimize adverse effects or to enhance quality of the environment.
- Tool to ensure that federal environmental policies and goals are considered in government actions.

HOW DOES THE NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY ACT AFFECT THE EIS FOR THE PROPOSED REPOSITORY AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN?

- Under this law, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is responsible for considering the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed geologic repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.
- DOE's EIS does not have to address: the need for a repository, alternatives to geologic disposal, or alternative sites to Yucca Mountain.
- On August 13, 1999, DOE issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a geologic repository for disposal of spent fuel and high level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain.
- NRC provided comments on DOE's DEIS in February, 2000.
- The law requires that the NRC adopt DOE's final EIS, to "the extent practicable," as part of any possible NRC repository construction authorization decision.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DOES NRC HAVE?

- NRC's role was to comment on, not to co-write DOE's DEIS.
- NRC's comments on the DEIS must be included with any recommendation of the site made by the Secretary of Energy to the President.
- NRC will adopt the final EIS unless significant, new information renders the EIS inadequate; or the action to be taken by NRC differs in an environmentally significant way, from that proposed in the DOE license application.

NRC COMMENTS ON DOE's DEIS

DOE should:

- Clearly define the Proposed Action, or provide a bounding analysis that includes all impacts.
- Augment analysis of cumulative impacts presented in the DEIS.
- Define a preferred transportation alternative, or show that transportation impacts are bounded.
- Expand discussion of mitigative measures and include discussion of monitoring.

Other comments involve treatment of:

Environmental justice, water-use, land use, and impacts on biological resources.

*NRC comments regarding DOE's DEIS can be viewed in their entirety on NRC's web site at:
<http://www.nrc.gov/NMSS/DWM/eisreview.htm>*