

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC BEGINS REVIEW OF DOE'S DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT ON YUCCA MOUNTAIN WASTE REPOSITORY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has started its review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement issued by the Department of Energy (DOE) Friday on the impacts of the disposal of nuclear waste in a possible future repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

A 16-member NRC review team will include experts in geology; hydrology; mechanical, nuclear, materials and geotechnical engineering; geochemistry; performance assessment; quality assurance; health physics; transportation and law. Specialists from the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses in San Antonio, the NRC's independent federally funded research and development center, will participate and provide additional expertise in a wide range of disciplines. The staff is preparing a review plan that it will use to guide the NRC's review. The review plan will be posted on the NRC's Internet web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/NMSS/DWM/ymdeisrp.htm>. Comments developed by the team will be reviewed by the Commission itself before being forwarded to DOE by the end of a 180-day public comment period on February 9.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which requires DOE to evaluate Yucca Mountain's suitability for a waste disposal facility, mandated that the Department prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and that it submit the EIS, and the NRC's comments on it, to the President if DOE recommends that the President approve the site for the development of a repository.

If, after receiving DOE's recommendation, the President considers the site qualified for construction of a repository, the President must submit a recommendation to the Congress. If the Congress permits the recommendation to take effect, DOE must then submit an application to the NRC for authorization to construct the facility. Along with the application, DOE must submit a final environmental impact statement, which will include NRC's comments on the draft environmental impact statement. Under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, the NRC will adopt the EIS to the extent practicable to satisfy the NRC's obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act as part of any possible construction authorization decision.

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