



NRC NEWS

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NRC SUBMITS COMMENTS TO DOE ON YUCCA MOUNTAIN INFORMATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has indicated, in preliminary comments to the Department of Energy, that it believes sufficient information will be available concerning a potential high-level radioactive waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, that development of an acceptable license application is achievable.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 requires that, when DOE makes a recommendation to the President on the suitability of the Yucca Mountain site for high-level waste disposal, it must include the preliminary comments of the NRC “concerning the extent to which the [DOE’s] at-depth site characterization analysis and the waste form proposal for such site seem to be sufficient for inclusion in any application to be submitted by the Secretary for licensing of such site as a repository.” DOE has not recommended the Yucca Mountain site for a repository and has not submitted an application to the NRC for a license.

“At-depth site characterization analysis” includes the investigation of underground features (such as the porosity of rock formations) and events and processes that occur below the ground surface (such as earthquakes, volcanoes and water flow). The “waste form proposal” includes information concerning spent fuel that was used in a reactor, the cladding that is around the fuel, the package in which the waste is placed, and other engineered barriers. Also considered are DOE-owned high-level radioactive waste and its packaging.

The NRC’s preliminary comments on the sufficiency of the information DOE has obtained to date, or has agreed to obtain prior to submitting a license application reflect many years of pre-licensing activities with DOE and various stakeholders, including, the State of Nevada, Indian Tribes, affected units of local government, representatives of the nuclear industry and interested members of the public.

Although the NRC believes that DOE has obtained, or will obtain, information that should be sufficient, the NRC is not drawing any conclusions concerning the actual site suitability, but will carefully review any licensing decision on the basis of all the information available at that time.

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