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WM Project

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**DOENNEWS**

FOR RELEASE:

APRIL 19, 1983 at 11 a.m.

**EXPLORATORY SHAFT DRILLING DELAYED**

In response to concerns of the State of Washington, the Yakima Indian Nation and the public, the Department of Energy has decided to delay the drilling of the Basalt Waste Isolation Project exploratory shaft at Hanford.

Drilling will be resumed following the issuance of revised generic site characterization guidelines for high level radioactive waste repositories and preparation of an environmental assessment based on those guidelines. The EA will also reflect the comments received in writing and in the recently completed hearing and will otherwise meet the requirements of the Act.

In announcing this decision, R. L. Morgan, Director of the Department's Nuclear Waste Policy Act Project Office said:

"The recent hearings have re-emphasized the importance of the involvement of the state and local governments, Indian tribes and the public in the siting process and the difficulty of balancing the statutory requirements for such involvement with the schedules for program accomplishments also set forth in the Act.

"By delaying the exploratory shaft at Hanford, we believe we can fulfill the intent of the Act, place the various potentially acceptable sites on more comparable schedules and obtain more meaningful participation by all parties concerned," Morgan said.

The Richland Operations Office will take all steps necessary to minimize costs associated with this delay.

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