



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD
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External Affairs

Board Reviews Status of Environmental Program at Yucca Mountain

The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board's Panel on the Environment & Public Health has planned a meeting for November 22, 1993, to review the status of the Department of Energy's environmental program at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The meeting, which will run from 8:30 A.M. until approximately 5:30 P.M., will be held at the Plaza-Suite Hotel, 4255 South Paradise Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109; telephone (702) 369-4400. The public is welcome to attend.

As part of its program to manage the disposal of the nation's spent fuel and defense high-level waste, the DOE is characterizing a site at Yucca Mountain to determine its suitability for locating a permanent repository for spent fuel and high-level waste. The DOE is required to meet a number of federal and state statutes and regulations to protect the environment during site-characterization, as well as during the construction and operation of a repository should the site prove suitable and be licensed for repository construction. As part of its effort to develop an overall environmental program, the DOE has been studying the various ecosystems at Yucca Mountain; monitoring and mitigation programs have been established; and numerous activities are under way aimed at reclaiming disturbed areas, protecting the endangered desert tortoise, and monitoring the effects of site-characterization activities. The November 22 meeting will provide the DOE the opportunity to review for the Board the status of current activities and outline future plans.

Although interested in exploring a number of issues, the Board would like to focus on several specific questions: (1) Are the ongoing environmental monitoring programs sufficient to detect significant adverse environmental effects that might occur during site characterization? (2) What monitoring results have been obtained to date? (3) What is the environmental significance of any monitoring results? (4) How does the DOE plan to document baseline environmental conditions and to project the potential long-term environmental effects of a repository? In addition to representatives of the DOE and its contractors, the Board has invited representatives of the state of Nevada to review their concerns regarding the DOE's environmental program. The meeting will conclude with a short, round-table discussion of the day's presentations.

The Board was created by Congress in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987 to evaluate the technical and scientific validity of activities undertaken by the DOE in its program to manage the disposal of the nation's spent fuel and defense high-level waste. Transcripts of this meeting will be available on a library-loan basis from Victoria Reich, Board librarian, beginning January 10, 1994.