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For Immediate Release*

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External Affairs*

## NWTRB Panel Looks at Disposal Implications of Defense Wastes

On Wednesday, June 15, 1994, the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board's Panel on the Engineered Barrier System (EBS Panel) will hold a one-day meeting to examine the implications for disposal of the defense wastes currently stored at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford facilities at Richland, Washington. The meeting, which is open to the public, will be held in the Tower Inn and Conference Center, 1515 George Washington Way, Richland, Washington 99352; Tel: 509-946-4121; Fax: 509-946-2222.

The meeting will run from 8:30 A.M. to approximately 5:00 P.M. and will focus primarily on two areas of interest to the Board. First, panel members will hear about the DOE's current plans for processing and packaging Hanford's high-level tank wastes (from defense reprocessing) into forms suitable for transportation to and disposal in a potential repository. Second, presentations will be heard on the quantities and characteristics of irradiated materials at Hanford that have not been reprocessed, as well as any plans for their processing and/or packaging into forms suitable for transportation and disposal. Finally, because of questions that have arisen recently about the fate of surplus weapons plutonium, panel members thought it appropriate to invite personnel from DOE headquarters to talk about how they will go about planning for the ultimate disposal of this material; for example, how could surplus weapons plutonium potentially affect plans for high-level waste repositories? In 1985, President Reagan determined that there would be no need for a special repository for defense wastes and that they should be included for disposal along with commercial spent nuclear fuel.

On Thursday, June 16, panel members will participate in a tour of the Hanford facilities. Because of time and space constraints at the facilities, the panel has invited a limited number of participants to join the tour, including a representative of the governor of Nevada as well as representatives from the Nevada state legislature, several affected Nevada counties, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Department of Energy.

The NWTRB 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 nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste. Currently, the DOE is characterizing a site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, to determine its suitability as a repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level defense waste.

Transcripts of the meeting will be available on computer disk or on a library-loan basis in paper format from Victoria Reich, Board librarian, beginning July 28, 1994. For further information, contact

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