



2002

## DOE moves to finalize changes to proposed guidelines for evaluating suitability of Yucca Mountain

The Department of Energy (DOE) has submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for its review and concurrence a revised and updated set of draft guidelines for evaluating the suitability of Yucca Mountain. The draft notice of final rulemaking includes responses to the major relevant issues arising from the comments and concerns raised by members of the public.

The NRC conducted a similar review and concurrence of the original repository siting guidelines in 1984. These early guidelines were designed to evaluate and compare multiple sites then under consideration. In 1987, however, Congress directed the Department to limit its study to Yucca Mountain.

In 1992, Congress directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to promulgate a new, dose-based standard for a potential repository at Yucca Mountain, a standard designed specifically to further protect public health and safety. Congress also directed the NRC to revise its licensing regulations to be consistent with the new EPA standard. Both organizations have since issued their proposed rules for the Yucca Mountain site, and the NRC has agreed to modify its rules, as necessary, to the EPA's standards once the standards are finalized.

On November 30, 1999, DOE issued a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking designed to formally amend the guidelines. The proposed amendments to the guidelines are specific to Yucca Mountain, and would establish criteria and a methodology for assessing site suitability consistent with the latest scientific and analytical techniques and align the guidelines with the NRC's requirements proposed in February 1999 as well as EPA standards proposed in August 1999. DOE proposed that it would evaluate the long-term performance capability of a repository at Yucca Mountain in meeting EPA and NRC standards by using a total-system-performance (computer modeling) approach. This approach addresses how specific repository design concepts will work within the natural system at Yucca Mountain to meet public health and safety standards over thousands of years. The Department's supplemental proposal called for the Yucca Mountain site to be deemed suitable only if DOE could demonstrate it was likely to meet applicable radiation protection standards.

The Department's proposal to amend the siting guidelines opened a nearly 90-day comment period, during which it held two public hearings. In response, DOE received a variety of written and oral comments from state and local officials in Nevada, other Federal agencies, regulatory and oversight organizations, industry groups, Native American organizations, and private citizens and citizen groups.

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U.S. Department of Energy  
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management

**YUCCA MOUNTAIN  
SITE CHARACTERIZATION  
PROJECT**

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