

DOE NEWS

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Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Program Releases Multi-Year Program Plan

A draft Program Plan for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) is being released today. This revised Program Plan has been prepared to implement the administration's Fiscal Year 1997 budget request and the direction of Congress in the Fiscal Year 1996 Appropriation's legislation. The Department of Energy recognizes that the plan is based on assumptions that may have to be updated and modified, as appropriate.

The plan is consistent with the administration's position on high-level radioactive waste management, in that geologic disposal remains the basic goal. The administration strongly believes that the siting of any interim storage facility must be based upon objective criteria and that such a decision should be informed by the scientific work necessary to determine the viability of the proposed Yucca Mountain repository. Prior to the completion of that work the activities in the plan related to interim storage are limited to non-site specific design and engineering and the preparation for transportation.

Improvements in integration and efficiency have enabled the program to adapt to a sharp reduction of program funding while preserving the core scientific programs at Yucca Mountain and to develop and propose a course of action that has the potential to regain the objective of repository licensing within a reasonable time frame.

Since the *1994 Program Plan* was initiated, a great deal of progress has been made in the scientific evaluation and understanding of the specific attributes of the Yucca Mountain site. Since 1993, the project has excavated over three-and-a-half miles of tunnel and four testing alcoves; drilled seven deep and 19 shallow boreholes; and excavated 13 trenches for geologic investigations. Analysis of the data collected over the past 20 years, and in particular the last several years, has confirmed many of the hypotheses that will be relied upon for a site suitability determination and a license application for the repository.

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Key elements of the new program direction for the Yucca Mountain Project include:

- *Updating the regulatory framework for a repository at Yucca Mountain in 1997* — the program will propose amendments to the Department of Energy's siting guidelines that will lead to a more efficient process for suitability determination.
- *Completing the viability assessment of the Yucca Mountain Repository Site in 1998* — the program will address the major unresolved technical questions so that an informed assessment can be made of the viability of licensing and constructing a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. The assessment will include critical repository design elements, a total system performance assessment, a plan and cost estimate for remaining work required for a license application, and a cost estimate to construct and operate the repository.
- *Recommending a repository site to the President in 2001 and submitting a repository license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 2002* — the program's strategy is to concentrate on the factors significant to the performance of a repository at Yucca Mountain. After completion of the viability assessment, the program will prepare the additional information necessary for the Secretary of Energy's site recommendation to the President and license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

OCRWM will also focus some resources on activities designed to ensure that waste acceptance can begin as soon as policy and technical developments allow. A waste acceptance and transportation strategy is being developed that will rely on private sector implementation. An acquisition strategy for equipment and services will be developed and industry and vendor views solicited.

To obtain a copy of the revised plan, please contact the Civilian Radioactive Waste Information Center at 1-800-225-6972, or access it through the OCRWM Home Page on the Internet at <http://rw.doe.gov>.