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Yucca Mountain Repository

The U.S. Department of Energy began studying Yucca Mountain, Nevada, in 1978 to determine whether it would be suitable for the nation's first long-term geologic repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Currently stored at 121 sites around the nation, these materials are a result of nuclear power generation and national defense programs.

The Department of Energy has submitted an application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a license to build the repository.

Yucca Mountain is located in a remote desert on federally protected land within the secure boundaries of the Nevada Test Site in Nye County, Nevada. It is approximately 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada.

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[Why do we need a national repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste?](#)

- Nuclear waste is currently located in more than 120 locations in 39 states.
Read More: [Waste locations by state](#)
- Current storage sites are temporary and not designed to store spent fuel indefinitely.
Read More: [What are Spent Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste?](#)
- The Nuclear Waste Policy Act is based on the principle that our society is responsible for safely disposing of the nuclear wastes we create.
Read More: [The Nuclear Waste Policy Act](#)

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[Why was Yucca Mountain chosen?](#)

- Yucca Mountain is in a remote, desert area on federal land.
Read More: [Why Yucca Mountain? \[pdf\]](#)
- Most scientists around the world agree that the best place to put this radioactive material is in a facility deep underground.

Read More: [Why Do Scientists Think a Repository Will Work?](#)

- After over 20 years of research and billions of dollars of carefully planned and reviewed scientific field work, the Department of Energy has found that a repository at Yucca Mountain brings together the location, natural barriers, and design elements most likely to protect the health and safety of the public, including those Americans living in the immediate vicinity, now and long into the future.

Read More: [Site Recommendation](#)

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What is the plan for the repository?

- The basic idea is to place carefully packaged materials in an underground network of tunnels.

Read More: [Overview: The Yucca Mountain Project](#)

- Specially designed and constructed buildings will contain advanced equipment and radiation-shielding features for receiving and preparing the waste for disposal.

Read More: [Repository Engineering and Design](#)

- DOE updated its report of environmental, economic, and other impacts in the spring of 2008.

Read More: [Information on the Supplemental Yucca Mountain Repository EIS](#)

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How do we know the repository would be safe?

- DOE built a 5-mile underground laboratory to study the rock for the planned repository.

Read More: [The Exploratory Studies Facility](#)

- Using physical experiments, advanced software and high-powered computers, scientists are able to project how the repository is likely to behave.

Read More: [The Total System Performance Assessment](#)

Read More: [Augmenting field and laboratory science with advanced computer technology](#)

- The mountain's dry climate and natural features will work with engineered barriers.

Read More: [Nature and engineering working together for a safe repository](#)

- What about earthquakes?

Read More: [Studying the movement of rock and earthquakes](#)

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Who pays for Yucca Mountain?

- The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 requires utilities which generate electricity using nuclear power to pay a fee of one tenth of one cent (\$0.001) per kilowatt-hour into the Nuclear Waste Fund.

Read More: [Budget and Funding](#)

- The cost for the expected life cycle of the Program (150 years, between 1983 and 2133) is projected to be \$96 billion in 2007 dollars.

Read More: [Total System Life Cycle Cost Report](#)

- Approximately \$9.5 billion has been spent so far.

Read More: [OCRWM Budgets and Financial Information](#)

- Which states have paid most?

Read More: [Purchaser Fee Payments to the Nuclear Waste Fund](#)

- "For each year beyond 2017 that the repository's opening is delayed, the Department estimates that U.S. taxpayers' potential liability to contract holders who have paid into the Nuclear Waste Fund will increase by approximately \$500 million. This will be in addition to the estimated current

potential liability of approximately \$7.0 billion due to the Department's not beginning removal of spent nuclear fuel in 1998 as required by contract." -- OCRWM Director Ward Sproat, testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives.

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How will the material get to Yucca Mountain?

- Spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste will arrive mostly by rail, with some truck shipments.
Read More: [Transportation of Spent Nuclear Fuel](#)
- DOE plans to build a railroad through Nevada to Yucca Mountain.
Read More: [Information on the rail corridor environmental impact statement](#)

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What is the repository's chronology and what's next?

- What has already happened?
Read More: [History of the Nuclear Waste Program | News Releases](#)
- What are the next steps? DOE filed a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in June 2008.
Read More: [Repository licensing](#)

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