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High-Level Waste Disposal

On June 3, 2008, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) submitted a [license application](#) to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), seeking authorization to construct a deep geologic repository for disposal of [high-level radioactive waste](#) at [Yucca Mountain, Nevada](#). The NRC's review of that application will require evaluation of a wide range of technical and scientific issues. The NRC will issue a construction authorization only if DOE can demonstrate that it can safely construct and operate the repository in compliance with the NRC's [regulations](#). See [What We Regulate](#) and [How We Regulate](#) (on this page) for the latest news and information about the NRC's high-level waste disposal activities and the process the agency will use to decide whether to authorize DOE to construct a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain.

Yucca Mountain Geologic Repository

- [DOE Application \(June 3, 2008\)](#)
- [Licensing Support Network Document Collection](#)

What We Regulate

United States policies governing the permanent disposal of HLW are defined by the [Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982](#), as amended (NWPA). This Act specifies that HLW will be disposed of underground, in a deep geologic repository, and that Yucca Mountain, Nevada, will be the single candidate site for characterization as a potential geologic repository. Under the Act, the NRC is one of three Federal agencies with a role in the disposal of spent nuclear fuel, as well as the HLW from the Nation's nuclear weapons production activities:

- The [U.S. Department of Energy \(DOE\)](#) [EXIT](#) is responsible for designing, constructing, operating, and [decommissioning](#) a permanent disposal facility for HLW, under NRC licensing and regulation.
- The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) [EXIT](#) is responsible for developing site-specific environmental standards for use in evaluating the safety of a geologic repository.
- The NRC is responsible for developing regulations to implement the EPA's safety standards, and for licensing and overseeing the construction and operation of the repository. In addition, the NRC will consider any future DOE applications for license amendments to permanently close the repository, dismantle surface facilities, remove controls to restrict access to the site, or undertake any other activities involving an unreviewed safety question.

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How We Regulate

In accordance with its [mission](#), the NRC focuses its regulatory actions on protecting the health and safety of the public and the environment both before and during the active life of the proposed Yucca Mountain repository, and after the facility has been [decommissioned](#). The NRC staff accomplishes this mission by performing the following activities:

- Establish and enforce safety and security [regulations](#)
- Perform a comprehensive [safety review](#) of DOE's license application
- Perform an [adoption review](#) of DOE's environmental impact statement
- Conduct a public, formal [adjudicatory hearing](#)
- Decide whether to authorize or deny repository construction
- Decide whether to authorize or deny a license to receive and possess waste at Yucca Mountain (if DOE is authorized to construct the repository)
- Inspect and [oversee](#) any construction, waste emplacement, and/or repository closure

activities at Yucca Mountain

For additional information about the NRC's role in regulating the proposed geologic repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, see the following pages:

- [Regulations, Guidance, and Communications](#)
- [Conceptual Design](#)
- [Pre-Licensing Activities](#)
- [DOE's License Application](#)
- [Licensing Activities](#)
- [Regulatory Oversight](#)
- [Public Involvement](#)

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Related Information

Some links on this page are to documents in our [Agencywide Documents Access and Management System \(ADAMS\)](#), and others are to documents in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). ADAMS documents are provided in either PDF or Tagged Image File Format (TIFF). To obtain free viewers for displaying these formats, see our [Plugins, Viewers, and Other Tools](#) page. If you have questions about search techniques or problems with viewing or printing documents from ADAMS, please contact the [Public Document Room staff](#).

- [Backgrounder on Radioactive Waste](#)
- [Radioactive Waste: Production, Storage, Disposal \(NUREG/BR-0216\)](#)
- [Waste Confidence Decision Update **EXIT**](#)
- [NRC Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Revisions to its Waste Confidence Decision](#)
- [Consideration of Environmental Impacts of Temporary Storage of Spent Fuel After Cessation of Reactor Operation **EXIT**](#)
- [Consideration of Environmental Impacts of Temporary Storage of Spent Fuel After Cessation of Reactor Operation and Waste Confidence Decision Update: Extension of Comment Period **EXIT**](#)
- [High-Level Waste Hearings](#)
- [The Hearing Process](#)
- [Fact Sheet on Licensing Yucca Mountain](#)
- [Licensing Support Network Document Collection](#)

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