

## YUCCA MT. -- a **REAL** Radioactive Waste!

President Bush has finally recommended the controversial Yucca Mt., Nevada, site to become the Nation's "high-level" radioactive waste (HLRW) perpetual storage dump. This is in spite of the numerous problems that have been identified with the site:

- ◆ Finding chlorine-36 — produced during nuclear weapons tests — inside the mountain. Nuclear tests have only occurred the past 60 years. A pathway exists for Cl-36 to enter, suggesting a pathway also exists for radioactive materials to escape.
- ◆ Yucca Mt. is in a geologically active area. Evidence of volcanism within the past 10,000 years exists; and 625 earthquakes 2.5 or greater on the Richter scale within 50 miles of Yucca since 1976. A 5.6 magnitude earthquake did extensive damage to DOE's Project Field Office in 1992.
- ◆ Evidence suggests that hot water once welled up from beneath Yucca Mt. into the strata under consideration for the HLRW. If this happens again while wastes are present, they will be easily released.
- ◆ Scientists recently discovered that long-lived plutonium in HLRW migrates far faster than previously thought, and could actually reach aquifers at Yucca within 70 years once released.
- ◆ Moisture destroyed almost 80% of measuring equipment in a test chamber within one year, suggesting the mountain may not be as dry as thought.

Recent revelations about the Yucca Mt. site and the political process all argue against its selection:

- ◆ DOE's December, 2001, revised weakening of its standards so the government no longer must prove that the site's underground rock formations would prevent radioactive contamination of the environment;
- ◆ December, 2001 GAO study states a "loss of management control" of studies on the safety and suitability of Yucca Mt. to hold thousands of tons of HLRW, and that DOE has yet to resolve 293 technical issues at Yucca Mt. (GAO-02-191, Dec. 21, 2001);
- ◆ Dept. of Transportation revelations that it is not prepared to deal with massive amounts of HLRW transport that Yucca Mt. and WIPP would generate (36,300 truck shipments would go through Illinois, according to DOE estimates);
- ◆ conflict of interest charges against DOE and its contractor, Winston and Strawn;
- ◆ the federal government's Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board reporting to DOE and Congress in January, 2002, that "the technical basis for the D.O.E.'s repository performance estimates is weak to moderate at this time" and concluding, "*The board has **limited confidence** in current performance estimates generated by the D.O.E.'s performance assessment model;*"
- ◆ the March 21, 2002 report from GAO stating, "'DOE is not prepared to submit an acceptable license application to NRC within the statutory limits that would take effect if the site is approved.'"
- ◆ allegations by former DOE Yucca Mt. project manager John Bartlett stating that the site would never achieve the standards the law requires.
- ◆ and most recently, an article appearing in *Science* magazine (Vol. 296, No. 5568, April 26, 2002, pp. 659-660), highly critical of the Yucca Mt. site, which stated, "*In our view, the disposal of high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mt. is based on unsound engineering strategy and poor use of present understanding of the properties of spent nuclear fuel.... To move ahead **without first addressing** the outstanding scientific issues will only continue to marginalize the role of science and detract from the credibility of the DOE effort.*"

The Nation needs REAL solutions for its HLRW problem. Yucca Mt. is a political sham, a way to allow the nuclear industry to keep *making* wastes, regardless of the effects on people, the environment, or the economy.

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