

*January 21, 1992
For Immediate Release*

*Contact: Paula N. Alford
External Affairs*

Board Panel Meets with the DOE on Engineered Barriers And Defense High-Level Waste Operations

As part of its congressional mandate to independently review the Department of Energy's (DOE) program to manage the disposal of civilian spent nuclear fuel, the NWTRB's Panel on the Engineered Barrier System has scheduled a meeting for February 10, 1992, in Augusta, Georgia. In the morning, the DOE's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) will review the status of studies on thermal loading and the engineered barrier system (EBS). Representatives from TRW, the M&O contractor, will outline plans to perform systems studies. The afternoon session will be devoted to a presentation on the defense high-level waste management operations at the Savannah River Plant, a DOE weapons complex. The meeting, which is open to the public, will be held at the Sheraton Augusta Hotel, 2651 Perimeter Parkway, Augusta, Georgia 30909; (404) 855-8100. The session will begin at 8:30 A.M. The DOE currently is evaluating the suitability of a site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for locating a permanent repository for the disposal of approximately 62,000 metric tons of civilian spent fuel and 8,000 metric tons of defense high-level waste from reprocessing. Spent fuel, which is highly radioactive, releases heat as it decays. When and how the fuel is emplaced in the proposed repository determines the thermal load, and thus the temperatures that will occur in the surrounding geology. These elevated temperatures may affect the long-term performance of the EBS, which plays an important role in the repository's performance. The EBS comprises all engineered components of the waste disposal system designed to prevent the release of radionuclides from the underground facility into the surrounding environment, including the waste form (spent fuel or vitrified reprocessing waste), the waste containers, the material placed over and around such containers, and the backfill materials.

To gain a better understanding of how defense high-level waste is managed and processed, panel members have asked the DOE and its contractors to brief them on operations at the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) at Savannah River, where high-level waste will be converted into vitrified glass logs for eventual disposal. Members also are interested in the glass sampling and quality assurance programs.

On February 11 and 12 as a follow-up to the meeting, panel members and staff have been invited to tour waste-handling operations at Savannah River and the DWPF. They also will visit the commercial low-level waste disposal site operated by Chem-Nuclear Systems, Inc., at Barnwell, South Carolina.

Transcripts of the February 10 meeting will be available on a library-loan basis from Victoria Reich, Board librarian, beginning March 30, 1992.
