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For Immediate Release*

External Affairs

Testing for Site Characterization — Topic of Joint Panel Meeting

The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board's (the Board) Panels on Hydrogeology & Geochemistry and Structural Geology & Geoen지니어ing will hold a joint meeting on the testing methods the Department of Energy (DOE) plans to use during characterization of the site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Congress directed the DOE to evaluate the site for the possible location of a permanent high-level radioactive waste repository. The meeting will be held from June 25-27, 1991, at The Registry Hotel, 3203 Quebec Street, Denver, Colorado 80207; (303) 321-3333. On June 25 and 26, the meeting will run from 8:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.; on June 27, from 8:30 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.

Panel members will be briefed by representatives of the DOE, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the national laboratories on the testing to be used, including surface-based testing, to evaluate the hydrogeology, geochemistry, and rock mechanics at the proposed site. This testing is an integral part of the DOE's program to determine whether or not the site is suitable for the development of a repository.

On Tuesday, June 25, panel members will hear from the DOE, the USGS, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, beginning with a discussion of the conceptual framework for testing in the unsaturated zone (above the water table) and continuing with specific tests planned to characterize meteorological phenomena, infiltration, and fluid-flow in the unsaturated zone. Some discussion also will be devoted to gaseous phases, including airflow, possible releases of carbon 14, and the effects of repository development on the conduct of testing.

On Wednesday, June 26, representatives from the DOE, the USGS, and Los Alamos National Laboratory will continue the briefing on testing in the unsaturated zone with an emphasis on geochemical isotope methods. Testing in the saturated zone (below the water table) will then be discussed, and presenters will review the hydrochemical testing plans and the tests proposed to evaluate the groundwater flow system. The day will close with a general discussion of the proposed hydrogeologic and geochemical testing.

On Thursday, June 27, discussions will focus on proposed testing in the area of rock mechanics. Representatives from Sandia National Laboratories will review the overall framework for these studies

and for the planned in-situ tests. The session will close with a general discussion of the rock mechanics program.

The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board was established by the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987 to evaluate the technical and scientific validity of activities undertaken by the DOE in its civilian high-level waste disposal program. In that same amendment, Congress directed the DOE to characterize one site, at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for possible development of a permanent underground repository for spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level radioactive waste.

Members of the public are welcome to attend as observers. Transcripts will be available on a library-loan basis beginning July 18, 1991, from the Board librarian.
