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For Immediate Release*

*Contact: Paula N. Alford
External Affairs*

DOE Briefs NWTRB on Progress at Proposed Yucca Mountain Site

As part of its congressional mandate to independently review the Department of Energy's (DOE) program to manage the nation's civilian spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste, the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board (the Board) has asked officials from the DOE to brief the Board at its April 7 and 8, 1992, meeting in Dallas, Texas, on the progress of the DOE's site-characterization program at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. Congress has charged the DOE with evaluating the suitability of the Nevada site as a location for a permanent radioactive waste repository. The Board has expressed its concern about a DOE decision to delay underground excavation at the site. In its fourth report and in a letter to the Secretary of Energy, the Board said that underground excavation is critical to the early evaluation of site suitability. The meeting, which will be held at the Adolphus Hotel, 1321 Commerce St., Dallas, Texas 75202; (214) 742-8200, will begin on both days at 8:30 A.M. Members of the public are welcome to attend as observers.

On Tuesday, April 7, DOE representatives will discuss two recently completed studies. The Board will review the most recent Performance Assessment and compare DOE results with assessments done by other groups. The Board also will be reviewing the methodology and conclusions of the Early Site Suitability Evaluation, which was commissioned by the DOE to help determine early site suitability. Finally, DOE representatives will brief the Board on plans for the second phase of the Test Prioritization Task. The purpose of the original study was to identify those tests that could be conducted early to detect potentially unsuitable site conditions at the Yucca Mountain site. Representatives of the state of Nevada also will present their views of the studies.

The April 8 session will continue with presentations by the DOE on (1) the surface-based drilling program, including a description of the technology being developed to improve the performance of the Lang 300 drill rig; (2) its progress on the design of the exploratory studies facility; and (3) the status of the necessary state permits for site characterization, including a description of additional permits required for underground exploration.

Transcripts of the meeting will be available on a library-loan basis beginning May 26, 1992. For information regarding the transcripts, please contact Ms. Davonya Barnes.