



United States Department of Energy
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20585

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FOR IMMEDIATE
Tuesday, June 3, 2008

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery for Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman
Yucca Mountain Press Conference
National Press Club
Washington, D.C.

Thank you all for being here. I'm pleased to announce that this morning the Department of Energy submitted a license application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission seeking authorization to build America's first national repository for spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste at Yucca Mountain, Nevada.

We are confident that the NRC's rigorous review process will validate that the Yucca Mountain repository will provide for the safe disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste in a way that protects human health and our environment.

This application represents the culmination of over 20 years of work by some of our nation's leading scientists, engineers and technical experts.

Eight of our world-class National Laboratories have been involved in conducting the research and analyses that underpin this application, including Sandia National Laboratory, which coordinated the scientific work.

In addition, this submission reflects the collaborative efforts of a team of highly experienced engineers at Bechtel SAIC Company, as well as numerous federal agencies, including DOE's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, the U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, and the U.S. Geological Survey, which conducted studies of the Yucca Mountain site and surrounding areas over several decades.

This application is a very high-quality, extremely detailed document running over 8,600 pages in length and is accompanied by a Final Environmental Impact Statement, as well as approximately 200 key supporting documents.

A link to the licensing application is available on the DOE web site. And we have made publicly available more than 3.6 million documents relating to the Yucca Mountain licensing proceeding on the NRC's website.

Let me say just a bit about the process to this point.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, as amended, establishes a process for the identification, characterization and approval of a site for a permanent geologic repository and for its licensing by the NRC. Over the past two decades, this project has enjoyed broad bipartisan support in Congress. And in 2002, the President and both chambers of Congress designated Yucca Mountain as the site for the development of the nation's first permanent repository.

Today's application begins a new phase for the Yucca Mountain Project. The NRC will conduct an initial review to determine whether to accept the application for formal review. Then, the full licensing process is scheduled to be conducted over a three year period.

This submission will further encourage the expansion of nuclear power in the United States, which is absolutely critical to our energy security to our environmental health and to our national security.

If we are to meet growing energy demand and slow the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, nuclear power must be a larger part of our energy mix; it is a mature technology with significant potential to supply large amounts of emissions-free base load power.

In order to ensure that such an expansion can occur, the United States simply must have a permanent repository for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste.

Currently, this waste is stored at 121 temporary locations in 39 states. This material is directed to go to Yucca Mountain by law and even more than that, I believe that we have a responsibility to future generations to deal with this waste problem on a permanent, not temporary basis.

Today's announcement brings our nation one step closer to fulfilling that obligation.

On a personal level, let me say that I know some Americans have deeply felt concerns about the Yucca Mountain facility. And I do not seek to dismiss those concerns nor minimize them on the contrary; issues of health, safety and security have been paramount during this entire process.

They are the driving factors in all decisions we have made and that will continue going forward, as will our commitment to ensuring that this continues to be an open and transparent process.

And so I want to speak to all Americans when I say with great confidence that I stand behind this application, as do the men and women who have worked so hard over the past two decades to get us to this point.

It is our collective judgment that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will conclude that this project can and will be completed in a safe and secure manner and, upon completion, that it will contribute to materially improving our nation's energy security.

I thank you for your time today. Ward and I will be happy to take your questions now.

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