

# What's Wrong With the Yucca Mountain Repository?

## 1. It is on stolen Western Shoshone land.

The Treaty of Ruby Valley, ratified by Congress in 1863, is the supreme law of the land. The US has never shown legal title to this land, even when requested by federal and international courts.

## 2. It would contaminate groundwater.

Yucca Mountain scientists will readily tell you that the question is not if the repository will release its contents, but when. Groundwater moves rapidly down through the site. Tracers from atmospheric nuclear weapons tests have been found at the underground level at which waste would be placed. This means that precipitation on the surface can reach the waste in less than 50 years, then carry the radioactive material using the groundwater in as little as possibly a few hundred years.

## 3. It would endanger millions of people nearby.

Downstream from the site, groundwater is used for drinking, irrigation, and the largest dairy in the Nevada, supplying thousands of children with milk. Seventeen miles away, California hosts 1.4 million tourists a year going to Death Valley. Seven tributaries flow down Yucca Mountain to the underground Amargosa River, said by some to be the longest and biggest in the world. The Amargosa empties into Death Valley, after flowing right through a number of towns. Flash floods are frequent, and can close roads for days.

## 4. It would endanger millions more people across the country.

Nuclear waste is safer sitting still than going 60-90 MPH. Distinctive casks are an obvious and vulnerable target. No study has been done on specific risks of transporting the waste to Yucca Mountain over a 30 year period, through 43 states, more than 100 cities with population over 100,000 and within one-half mile of over 50 million people.

## 5. It is not 'geologic disposal', required by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act requires that geology be the primary barrier to radioactive contamination. This is not possible at Yucca Mountain, so the DOE's design depends on an engineered barrier, of unproven durability. The State of Nevada has filed suit against DOE claiming this is a violation of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act requirement for geologic isolation.

## 6. Insufficient data exists to evaluate waste containers.

The Department of Energy is proposing to place the waste in "corrosion resistant" metal containers, which it claims will contain the wastes for more than 10,000 years, the duration of the regulatory period set by the EPA and Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The wastes remain hazardous for hundreds of thousands of years. The claim of corrosion resistance is based on about 2 years of lab experiments under conditions less severe than would be expected in the repository, and then these corrosion results have been extrapolated for the thousands of years of containment necessary.

## 7. 600 earthquakes in 20 years, with 33 faults on site.

Yucca Mountain is the third most [seismically active area](#) in the continental US (after Alaska and coastal California). In the past 20 years, there have been over 600 earthquakes within 50 miles, with the largest, in 1992, causing \$1.4 million in damage to DOE's Yucca Mountain field office.

## 8. DOE's rush to please the nuclear industry is premature and illegal.

The Yucca Mountain studies and site recommendation have been called inadequate and/or incomplete by the General Accounting Office, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board and several international peer review panels. The DOE still has at least 293 studies of site and design factors that it has agreed to complete before it submits a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act requires that site characterization be complete at the time of a site recommendation (Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002) and that the license application must be submitted within 90 days of site designation. However, the DOE's Yucca Mountain Management and Operating contractor has estimated that it will take 4 years to complete these studies.

For more information, go to our website-- the Yucca Mountain and Peoples' Nuclear Policy on Waste sections. You can also follow links to many other experts on this issue. Contact your Senators and Representatives immediately.