



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR WASTE TECHNICAL REVIEW BOARD
2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1300
Arlington, VA 22201

***December 22, 1997
For Immediate Release***

***Frank Randall
External Affairs***

**Winter meeting focuses on thermal testing, the saturated zone at Yucca Mountain,
and public input to the Board**

The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board will return to Amargosa Valley, Nevada, January 20-21, 1998, to hold a public meeting on the Yucca Mountain project. The focus of the meeting will be the thermal testing program and saturated zone modeling for Yucca Mountain, and public comments on the Board's activities under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 20, at the Longstreet Inn, HCR 70, Box 559, Amargosa Valley, Nevada 89020; Tel. (702) 372-1777; Fax. (702) 372-1280. The agenda for the afternoon will contain updates on the Yucca Mountain project and a session on the GPRA. In 1993, Congress passed this act, which is intended to improve confidence in government by holding agencies accountable for actions that affect taxpayers' lives. The Board would like to solicit comments in response to the following three questions.

- Does the Board conduct its meetings in an open, objective, and fair manner? For example, are members of the public treated with respect and consideration when participating in the meetings?
- Given the technical and often detailed nature of the Board's work, does the Board explain its *major points and positions* in reports and letters so that they are understandable? For example, is there a general understanding of the reasons for the Board's recommendation to construct an east-west crossing of the potential repository block at Yucca Mountain?
- Most important, to what extent is the Board a credible source of scientific and technical advice to the Department of Energy and the Congress? In general, what is the basis for your opinion?

In responding to these questions, please keep in mind that the *scope* of the Board's work is defined specifically in federal law. That law, P.L.100-203, December 22, 1987, mandates that the Board is to evaluate the scientific and technical work of the Department of Energy in its

commercial nuclear waste disposal program, including waste packaging and transportation activities.

Recently, the Board made a field trip to the Amargosa Valley and the nearby Yucca Mountain site in Nevada to further study the geology and water flow of the region. Questions raised during the field trip will be among the issues addressed on day two of the winter meeting.

Day two will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 21, with a session on the Yucca Mountain thermal testing program, including the program's objectives, the large block test, and single heater test results. The next session will focus on the saturated zone, including regional-scale and site-scale ground-water flow modeling, geochemical evidence for flow compartmentalization, and saturated zone flow and transport modeling for total system performance assessment (TSPA). The final session will cover the DOE's saturated zone expert elicitation project, including key issues involved with the TSPA.

Ample time is scheduled for questions and comments from the public on both days. To ensure that everyone wishing to speak is provided time to do so, the Board encourages those who have comments to sign the *Public Comment Register*, which will be located at the sign-in table. Although a speaking time limit may have to be set, written comments of any length may be submitted for the record.

Transcripts of the meeting will be available via e-mail, on computer disk, or on a library-loan basis in paper format from Davonya Barnes, Board staff, beginning February 18, 1998. For more information, contact Frank Randall, External Affairs, 2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1300, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3367; (Tel) 703-235-4473; (Fax) 703-235-4495; (E-mail) info@nwtrb.gov.

The Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board was created by Congress in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987 to evaluate the technical and scientific validity of activities undertaken by the DOE in its program to manage the disposal of the nation's spent nuclear fuel and defense high-level waste.

#####