

Dangers

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This process creates convection currents similar to the world's hydrologic cycle — where water evaporates, forms clouds, then returns as rain.

The water returning to the site may infiltrate the hot repository and be flashed into steam. When the containers holding the wastes have sufficiently corroded (a definite fact) the steam and water may carry the radionuclides out through the fractures in the rock to the water table beneath or upward to the atmosphere.

The DOE's plan consists of keeping the repository temperature above the boiling point for an extended period (few hundred to a few thousand years). The logic for this is that a hot repository will boil away the water in the rock pores and fractures around the wastes, and assuming that waste containers will stay dry.

The higher temperatures expand and fracture rock easily. The overall effects of this unreasonable logic is to increase the number of scientific uncertainties regarding the waste isolation at the site. The dangerous effects of high temperature.

Groundwater contamination is another primary concern to Nevada-desert residents. According to the NNWPO, since water flows downward through the layers of rock into the aquifers beneath, and the repository would be above the water table, the time it takes for the water to flow through the repository to reach the water table underneath is a matter of utmost importance.

When the canisters break apart 100-300 years from now, the radioactive materials will be released. The ultimate event is that the water will infiltrate the repository through the many fractures in the rocks, flow through the repository, pick up the radioactive materials and then carry it to the water table.

State scientists believe, according to the NNWPO, that the travel time the groundwater will take is much less than that purported by the DOE; also, their estimate is that it will take less than 1,000 years.

According to the NNWPO, recent evidence uncovered by a team of 30 scientists at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (operated by DOE) revealed that the high-level nuclear waste buried at Yucca Mountain may explode and could scatter radioactivity all over the world.

Carl Johnson, administrator for technical programs at NNWPO, stated "This is an issue the State of Nevada has raised for a long time. Every time we do, DOE officials criticize us and dismiss it out-of-hand as being self-serving. Now we find that DOE's own scientists believe criticality to be

"Accepting benefits seriously impairs Nevada's right to oppose the dump in the future, even in the face of serious geotechnical flaws."

—Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office

an issue one they cannot disprove or dismiss."

According to Jim Hightower of Hightower Radio, "the trip to Yucca Mountain goes through your city or town — 70,000 tons of hot, highly radioactive nuclear waste, wending its way to Nevada along highways and rails crisscrossing 43 states ... nuclear accidents begging to happen."

Hightower's argument is valid. Every time the transportation accident potential is dis-

cussed, researchers and DOE scientists dismiss it by saying the statistical possibility is so low that no one should be concerned. What data are they using if high-level nuclear waste has never been shipped in such massive quantities to Yucca Mountain?

According to the NNWPO, only one accident involving a rail cask of spent nuclear fuel could cause clean-up costs exceeding \$620 million dollars for a small 42 mile square rural area. In an urban area, an accident of the same size could cost taxpayers about \$2 billion.

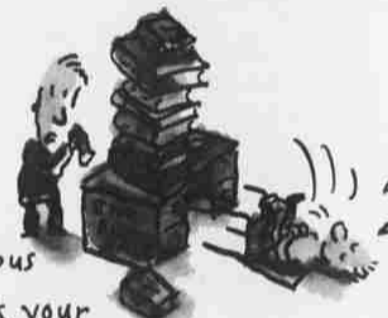
The U.S. Senate Government Affairs Committee and the General Accounting Office (GAO) have both documented radioactive and hazardous waste contamination of groundwater, soil and air at 124 of the 127 nuclear facilities

managed by the DOE. It will cost taxpayers \$2 billion dollars to clean up the mess, not including lawsuits for the health effects on the populace, if it can be cleaned up at all, according to the GAO.

A NNWPO report revealed that the DOE nuclear weapons facility in Rocky Flats, Colorado, was raided by EPA and FBI agents. The DOE contractor had been illegally dumping hazardous wastes there for many years and it was hushed up by the DOE. In the previous 3 years, the DOE had awarded \$26.8 million in bonuses to the contractor for excellent management of the facility.

Students interested in opposing UNLV's research involvement in the Yucca Mountain benefits payoff are encouraged to call Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office at 1-800-366-0990 for more information.

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