



Fact Sheet

TIMELINE FOR THE YUCCA MOUNTAIN PROJECT

PREPARED BY THE RESEARCH DIVISION
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU

SEPTEMBER 2018

With the introduction of nuclear power, there has been a continuous debate on what to do with nuclear waste produced during the process of generating electricity through this technology. Please find below a short overview of the important events surrounding the Yucca Mountain Project, the nation's nuclear waste repository venture.

YEAR	SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT
1982	Congress passes the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) of 1982.
1983	Pursuant to the NWPA, the United States Department of Energy (DOE) begins evaluating sites, including Yucca Mountain, for two geologic repositories.
1986	The DOE identifies Yucca Mountain as a potential candidate site for the first repository (other candidate sites located in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Utah, and Washington) as well as 12 potential sites in 7 states for a second repository.
1987	Congress amends the NWPA by designating Yucca Mountain as the only candidate site for the first deep geologic repository for the disposal of high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel and postpones planning for a second repository.
1988	The DOE holds public hearings on its site characterization plan for Yucca Mountain.
1991	Site characterization studies and testing begin at the Yucca Mountain site.
2001	The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announces proposed radiation standards for Yucca Mountain. The State of Nevada files suit against the EPA arguing the standards are inadequate.
2002	Spencer Abraham, Secretary, DOE, recommends Yucca Mountain as a suitable site to President George W. Bush. President Bush approves the recommendation.
	Kenny C. Guinn, Governor of Nevada, issues a Notice of Disapproval, exercising the state's right to veto the Yucca Mountain Project. Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate override Nevada's objection through the passage of H.J.R. 87 (Approving the site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for the development of a repository for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, pursuant to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982), 107 th Congress, introduced by U.S. Representative Joe Barton (R-Texas). President Bush signs the bill into law, officially designating Yucca Mountain as the nation's nuclear waste repository site.
	The DOE publishes the <i>Final Environmental Impact Statement for a Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye County, Nevada</i> .
2003	The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board releases a report in November expressing concerns about the potential for corrosion and high temperatures of the proposed repository.
2004	The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upholds a challenge by Nevada regarding the EPA's 10,000-year radiation standard for Yucca Mountain not being consistent with the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS's) recommendations but dismisses Nevada's other lawsuits.
2006	The DOE sets a new target date of 2017 for the opening of the Yucca Mountain repository.
	The NAS issues a report titled, <i>Going the Distance? The Safe Transport of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste in the United States</i> .

YEAR	SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT (<i>CONTINUED</i>)
2008	The DOE submits an application for a license to construct and operate the nation's first geologic repository for high-level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).
2009	The Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, DOE, publishes the <i>National Transportation Plan</i> .
	The NRC admits 299 contentions by 18 parties to the licensing proceeding. Steven Chu, Secretary, DOE, states that Yucca Mountain does not represent a viable option for the permanent storage of nuclear waste.
2010	President Barack Obama directs the DOE to discontinue its application to the NRC for a license to construct a repository at Yucca Mountain. The Administration's budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 eliminates all funding for development of the Yucca Mountain facility.
	The Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future is established.
	The NRC licensing board denies the DOE's motion to withdraw the license application.
2011	The NRC licensing board suspends the licensing proceeding.
2012	The Blue Ribbon Commission recommends the development of a consent-based approach to siting future spent nuclear fuel management facilities.
2013	The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit orders the NRC to restart the licensing proceeding with available funds.
	The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit orders that a fee collected on the generation of electricity from nuclear power plants that provides revenue for the Nuclear Waste Fund to end.
	The NRC orders staff to complete work on the safety evaluation report.
	The DOE issues a strategy for managing spent nuclear fuel in response to the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations.
2014	The NRC releases a report titled, <i>Safety Evaluation Report Related to Disposal of High-Level Radioactive Wastes in a Geologic Repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, Volume 3: Repository Safety After Permanent Closure</i> .
2015	The NRC staff issues a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) supplement on groundwater impacts.
2016	The NRC staff issues a final EIS supplement.
2017	March—Rick Perry, Secretary, DOE, visits Yucca Mountain and meets with Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval.
	April—The State of Texas brings forth a lawsuit to expedite the NRC licensing process.
	June—U.S. Representative John Shimkus (R-Illinois) introduces H.R. 3053 (Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017), 115 th Congress.
	October—H.R. 3053 is reported by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.
2018	A revised version of H.R. 3053 is reported by the House Rules Committee. The U.S. House of Representatives passes the bill.
	The omnibus appropriations bill, H.R. 1625 (Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018), 115 th Congress, introduced by U.S. Representative Edward R. Royce (R-California), did not provide new funding for licensure.
	The President's Budget for Federal FY 2019 seeks \$120 million for the DOE and \$48 million for the NRC. The Budget is undergoing congressional action as of publication of this report. The funding in the Budget is intended to move the licensing process forward.