

News from Around the Complex

December 2006

January 4, 2007

Department of Energy Releases the Notice of Intent for the GNEP Environmental Impact Statement, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced that a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for President Bush's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) Initiative is posted in the Federal Register. The NOI outlines the programmatic and project-specific proposals of GNEP. "We continue to mark significant progress with GNEP and we look forward to gaining a broader understanding of the environmental conditions under which we will be operating," DOE Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Dennis Spurgeon said. "Our need for nuclear power – a safe, emissions-free and affordable source of energy – has never been greater and GNEP puts us on a path to encourage expansion of domestic and international nuclear energy production while reducing nuclear proliferation risks." <http://www.energy.gov/news/4560.htm>

January 4, 2007

NNSA Administrator to Depart, *DOE Press Release*

WASHINGTON, DC - Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman today announced the resignation of Ambassador Linton Brooks, Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration. Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman released the following statement today: "During my tenure at the Department, and even before, there have been a number of management issues involving the National Nuclear Security Administration, the most recent of which was a serious security breach several months ago at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. These management and security issues can have serious implications for the security of the United States. The Deputy Secretary and I repeatedly have stressed to NNSA and laboratory management the importance of these issues being addressed, rectified, and prevented in the future." <http://www.energy.gov/news/4562.htm>

January 3, 2007

Rebar problem costs BWXT millions, *Knoxville News Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE – The government paid BWXT \$33.6 million for managing the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in 2006, even after the contractor was penalized for problems with a new uranium storage center. BWXT, a partnership of BWX Technologies and Bechtel National, operates the plant for the National Nuclear Security Administration under a performance-based contract. Ted Sherry, the Oak Ridge manager for the NNSA, said there was a \$1.9 million "fee adjustment" for problems that caused a two-month suspension of work on the new uranium storage facility. BWXT, however, indicated as much as \$5 million was lost due to those problems and, "to a much lesser degree," issues with several other projects. The contractor's overall performance rating for fiscal 2006 was "good," according to Sherry's Dec. 27 letter sent to George Dials, the president and general manager of BWXT Y-12 LLC. http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5254086,00.html

January 3, 2007

Oak Ridge incinerator to burn another 10 million pounds of waste, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

OAK RIDGE – The Department of Energy plans to burn more than 10 million pounds of toxic waste, much of it from out of state, at a special incinerator in Oak Ridge before permanently closing the facility in three years. Tennessee environmental officers have given preliminary approval to the plan so other states will accept Oak Ridge wastes for disposal at landfills or underground repositories in their jurisdiction. The Toxic Substances Control Act Incinerator, located at Oak Ridge's former K-25 uranium enrichment site, is uniquely qualified to burn a range of mixed wastes containing both radioactive materials and hazardous chemicals, including hard-to-destroy polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs. The \$26 million incinerator has

burned about 31 million pounds of waste during its 20 years of operation. Most of that has come from cleanup operations in Oak Ridge, where DOE also has the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_TN_Toxic_Waste.html

December 27, 2006

Yucca Mountain, State seeks ruling barring storage above the ground,
Pahrump Valley Times

CARSON CITY – The state of Nevada petitioned the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Friday to rule out the U.S. Department of Energy's plans to use the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada for indefinite surface storage of thousands of tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste. DOE's plan to store up to 21,000 tons of nuclear waste at the site is subject to NRC licensing. The proposed tonnage would be seven times the planned annual intake of the proposed Yucca Mountain underground repository, according to Bob Loux, executive director of the Nevada Agency for Nuclear Projects. The Nuclear Waste Policy Act specifically prohibits a large interim storage site in Nevada as long as the state is the proposed location of a repository. DOE claims the storage facility, which it calls an "aging facility" because it will hold spent fuel until it is cool enough to allow it to be moved underground, is integral to the efficient operation of the proposed repository. <http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2006/Dec-27-Wed-2006/news/11635190.html>

December 26, 2006

Great Lakes area's nuclear waste vexes U.S., Canada leaders,
Associated Press

DETROIT - Like the United States, Canada is searching for a permanent home for its high-level nuclear waste. But a proposal unfolding in Ontario to build a permanent underground storage facility within a mile of Lake Huron is being fought by a Michigan congressman. Michigan residents have relied on nuclear power for electricity since 1962, and the state now has four operating commercial reactors. For now, radioactive nuclear waste is being stored on site at the 31 reactors in the U.S. and Canada in the Great Lakes basin. Ontario's proposal would send low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste, such as contaminated mops, clothes and tools, from all the province's nuclear plants to a storage facility at the Bruce nuclear power complex in Kincardine, about 120 miles northeast of Detroit.

<http://www.gazetteextra.com/nuclearplantwaste122606.asp>

December 25, 2006

Secret nuclear find revealed, Highly radioactive material found in 2005 at Oak Ridge junkyard moved to safe site,
Knoxville News Sentinel

OAK RIDGE – Inside the fences of a Cold War junkyard, with contaminated scrap stacked in mountainous piles across 30 acres, cleanup workers were told to expect the unexpected. But nobody expected this - three unmarked casks containing thousands of curies of radioactive cesium-137. "It was a total surprise," said John Lea of Bechtel Jacobs Co., the government's cleanup manager in Oak Ridge. Cesium-137 is a product of nuclear fission that's created in reactors. It is used in lots of radiation equipment, ranging from medical therapy units that treat cancer to well-logging instruments in the oil industry. It also is considered an optimum material for radiological dispersal devices - so-called dirty bombs - and therefore coveted by terrorists. Oak Ridge National Laboratory officials were told the three casks contained about 10,000 curies of cesium and strontium-90, another fission product, said Tim Powers, a manager at ORNL. John Owsley of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation said state officials were told that one of the casks contained more than 200,000 curies of cesium, with lesser amounts in the other two casks. "That is a significant amount of material," he said. "It is unusual to find something of this magnitude."

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5236518,00.html

December 19, 2006

Showdown on nuke waste storage, *Sacramento Bee*

With power in the Senate shifting to the Democrats, opponents of a Nevada repository push for keeping the material at nuclear reactor sites. A few years ago, the plan to store the nation's nuclear waste in Nevada seemed all but certain. Congress decided that highly radioactive waste from commercial nuclear power plants, which takes centuries to decay, needed to be stored underground. And it voted by a wide margin in 2002 that Yucca Mountain, 100 miles from Las Vegas, was the place to build such a repository. But after the Nov. 7 elections, which propelled Democrats into power on Capitol Hill, the plan is facing challenges. Despite strong bipartisan support for Yucca Mountain in Congress, the incoming majority leader of the Senate, Nevadan Harry Reid, pledges that Yucca Mountain will never open. The incoming chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Californian Barbara Boxer, agrees. Both voted against the Yucca repository. They say nuclear waste should stay right where it is -- at the nation's nuclear power plants -- at least until better waste technology comes along. <http://www.sacbee.com/111/story/94694.html>

December 18, 2006

DOE removal project done early, Uranium hexafluoride relocated within budget, reducing radiation hazard, *Knoxville News Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The U.S. Department of Energy is wrapping up its uranium road show and declaring a big success. "It has removed the single greatest potential hazard on this site," DOE's David Hutchins said as he watched workers secure a protective overpack on a 10-ton cylinder of depleted uranium hexafluoride. About 6,000 of the cylinders, some weighing as much as 14 tons, have been hauled to Ohio over the past three years. The \$27.5 million project was accomplished within its budget. There were no major safety issues. The work was completed far ahead of schedule. http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5221153,00.html

December 18, 2006

The White House's Cold-War Cleanup Plan, *National Public Radio*

Dozens of nuclear research reactors still run on the kind of fuel that can be used to make an atomic bomb. The United States and the Soviet Union set them up during the Cold War as part of an effort to encourage the peaceful use of nuclear power and to build alliances. Since the 1980s, there have been various initiatives to undo that work, secure the fuel and convert the reactors. Two and half years ago, the Bush administration pledged to make these programs a priority. NPR's David Kestenbaum has a status report on the U.S. efforts to secure bomb-grade nuclear material around the world. According the Department of Energy, since the new initiative began, almost 750 pounds of highly enriched uranium have been sent back to Russia -- enough for at least several bombs. In the same time, six reactors around the world have been converted so they run off low-enriched uranium. That still leaves 80 on the government's to-do list. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6642883&ft=1&f=1003>

December 17, 2006

Yakamas to assess Hanford's toll, *Tri-City Herald*

The Yakama Nation has told the Department of Energy that it plans to complete its own assessment of natural resource damages at the Hanford nuclear reservation. "We have waited for decades for the federal government to fix our natural resources they injured," said Philip "Bing" Olney, chairman of the Yakama Nation General Council, in a statement. "Now the Yakama Nation itself has decided to assess the full extent of the injuries caused by the Hanford pollution." The Yakamas already have asked a federal judge to require DOE to pay the costs of performing an assessment to meet the requirements of Superfund site laws if DOE does not perform its own assessment or otherwise cooperate. The Yakamas have been joined in part in that lawsuit by the Nez Perce, the Umatillas, and the states of Washington and Oregon. The tribes have treaty rights to hunt and gather food and medicines in the Hanford area. <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/8499740p-8393055c.html>

December 16, 2006

Fallout link to thyroid cancer gets boost, If cancer victim lived in '50s, Nevada tests could be to blame, *Deseret News*

Almost anyone diagnosed with thyroid cancer who was a child in the United States during open-air nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site, and drank fresh milk from stores or farms, could make a case that development of the disease likely was influenced by radioactive fallout. That's the belief of F. Owen Hoffman, one of the authors of a new report summarizing impacts of fallout on thyroid cancer. The report is "Thyroid Doses and Risk of Thyroid Cancer from Exposure to I-131 from the Nevada Test Site," prepared by SENES Oak Ridge Inc., consultants based in Oak Ridge, Tenn. It calculates risks, breaking out several areas throughout the country and analyzing the danger of thyroid cancer to people born in certain years. Federal fallout compensation is available only to people who lived in selected counties. But as documented years ago, fallout from open-air nuclear blasts at the test site fell throughout the country. <http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,650215537,00.html>

December 15, 2006

NRC head: Permanent waste solution needed, *Earth Times*

WASHINGTON – The top federal nuclear regulator says the United States needs a finalized plan for storing nuclear waste. Dale Klein, chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said at a news conference Friday it will be advantageous to move forward on a permanent solution to housing the nuclear waste. U.S. nuclear plants and defense programs churn out 2,000 tons of waste a year now, with 54,000 tons already produced. But plans to create a permanent repository inside Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, are 20 years behind schedule. The project has been hampered by funding issues, political blockades and lawsuits, as well as controversy over the science and quality assurance aspects. The U.S. Energy Department, which heads the project, estimates it won't open until at least 2017, but probably after. <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/14096.html>

December 15, 2006

Certain WIPP waste shipments on hold, *Carlsbad Current Argus*

CARLSBAD – Shipments of certain radioactive waste from Idaho National Laboratory to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad are again on hold. The U.S. Department of Energy has temporarily suspended the batch of shipments, related to one waste stream, while the New Mexico Environment Department reviews the situation, a DOE official said. The DOE had originally halted the shipments from the waste stream after liquid was found during a double-check of an X-ray in Idaho. A waste stream involves similar types of waste from similar types of processes. All other shipments from Idaho National Laboratory have continued. http://www.currentargus.com/ci_4848905

December 12, 2006

DOE to restart suspended shipments from waste stream, *Carlsbad Current Argus*

CARLSBAD – The Department of Energy has authorized Idaho National Laboratory to restart shipments from the waste stream that was suspended from transport to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad. The suspension, which took place on Nov. 26, was initiated by the DOE after liquid was found in a waste drum in excess of what is allowed. WIPP is not allowed more than negligible levels of liquid waste because of the risks of leaks or potentially explosive materials. INL is in the process of sending 23,000 drums of transuranic waste to WIPP. http://www.currentargus.com/ci_4828995

December 11, 2006

Tune for cleanup of U-233 changes, Nuke material to be disposed of, and cost to do so has nearly tripled to \$379M, *Knoxville News Sentinel*

OAK RIDGE - The U.S. Department of Energy has revised its strategy - and its price tag - for one of the most challenging nuclear projects in recent history. The government's goal is to get rid of a large stockpile of uranium-233 stored in a World War II-era building at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. The Oak Ridge project is fraught with risk, both from a safety and a

security standpoint. The uranium-233 is a strategic nuclear material of potential use in nuclear bombs, thus requiring the highest level of security. It also is hotly radioactive because of byproducts formed during its decay - such as thorium-229 - and some work must be performed remotely to protect workers. The newly estimated cost is \$379.2 million, according to Steve McCracken, the environmental cleanup chief in Oak Ridge. That's almost triple the \$128 million DOE announced when awarding a contract for the project in 2003.

http://www.knoxnews.com/kns/local_news/article/0,1406,KNS_347_5205123,00.html

December 11, 2006

DOE to improve oversight at Yucca Mountain, *San Luis Obispo Tribune*

LAS VEGAS - The Energy Department is making a new push to fix how design mistakes are identified and corrected at a proposed national nuclear waste dump in Nevada, a top project official said. Paul Golan, principal deputy director for the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, said senior Yucca Mountain managers were involved in addressing what he characterized as "a chronic problem." Auditors have criticized the Energy Department for mistakes discovered in design documents and other work for the planned repository for 77,000 tons of spent nuclear reactor fuel and radioactive waste. Once built, the dump site would be the resting place of nuclear waste hauled in from various reactors around the country, including the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant near Avila Beach. Nevada officials who oppose the project say quality assurance problems should disqualify the site, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, from receiving waste now stored around the country.

<http://www.sanluisobispo.com/mld/sanluisobispo/16216329.htm>

December 10, 2006

New energy chair endorses Yucca Mountain, *Reno Gazette-Journal*

WASHINGTON - The incoming chairman of the Senate Energy Committee said Friday that Yucca Mountain remains the best option for nuclear waste disposal, and voiced skepticism about the alternative plan backed by Nevada's congressional delegation. The proposed nuclear waste dump "is the best of the options available to us at the current time assuming that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission determines that it's an appropriate site," Democratic U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico said in an interview. U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., and Nevada's other federal lawmakers want to store nuclear waste at the reactor sites around the country where some 50,000 tons of it now sits. "I don't think that's politically viable. I don't believe that will become law," Bingaman said.

December 7, 2006

National nuclear waste to be tackled by Vanderbilt-led multi-university team, *VU Cast (Vanderbilt University)*

NASHVILLE - Nuclear power might be "green power," but only if nuclear waste can be managed properly. Vanderbilt is leading a multi-university consortium in a major effort to improve the nation's efforts to deal with nuclear waste safely and effectively. The consortium, originally formed to advise the U.S. Department of Energy and its stakeholders on ways to manage the nation's military nuclear wastes, consists of engineers and scientists who have participated in efforts in the last decade to clean up nuclear weapons production sites and to dispose of nuclear wastes safely. Now, these nuclear waste experts hope to leverage their knowledge to help the U.S. find safe ways to effectively manage nuclear waste from civilian nuclear power as well. They see this effort as critical if the nation is to accept expanded nuclear power-generating capacities.

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news/releases/2006/12/7/national-nuclear-waste-to-be-tackled-by-vanderbilt-led-multi-university-team>

December 7, 2006

Hanford Funding on the Senate Floor, *KNDO/KNDU Tri-Cities*

KENNEWICK - Washington Senator Patty Murray was in front of the U.S. Senate Thursday fighting for continued federal cleanup dollars for the Hanford site. If the funding isn't passed tomorrow, it'll be delayed until the senate reconvenes a month from now. Senator Murray says the funding is critical for cleanup progress on the site. Republicans and democrats debated on the senate floor. At the forefront, Hanford cleanup. About \$700 million for the Waste

Treatment Plant sits up in the air. Senator Murray thinks a move must be made. "Our government has an obligation to cleanup the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Richland, Washington. Now as I speak that community is working hard to cleanup nuclear waste to protect the community and the environment," the Senator said. The republican Senate may adjourn Friday with money still on the table. Hanford's specific allotment is unknown, and if the funding bills aren't passed, Murray says funding will take a hit.

<http://www.kndo.com/Global/story.asp?S=5786017>

December 6, 2006

US reactors should store nuclear waste – regulator, Reuters

WASHINGTON – Nuclear waste should be kept at the reactors where it is produced until the planned Yucca Mountain storage site opens, the chairman of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission told reporters on Wednesday. Some have suggested energy companies ship waste to the Nevada site to be held above ground until proposed underground storage opens there in 2017, at the earliest. But Chairman Dale Klein said keeping byproducts from reactions at the facilities is a good temporary solution. "We need to solve the waste issue, whether there are new plants or not," Klein said. "As a nation we need to solve that problem. How we solve it is obviously a technical and a policy issue. But for our job as the licensing [agency], there is a temporary solution and at-reactor storage is safe, certified and licensed."

http://today.reuters.com/news/articleinvesting.aspx?type=bondsNews&storyID=2006-12-06T233524Z_01_N06478252_RTRIDST_0_NUCLEAR-YUCCA.XML

December 6, 2006

Parochial interests? Pro-Yucca Mountain group challenges Reid, Some nuke interests indicate a willingness to work with new majority leader, Pahrump Valley Times

WASHINGTON – Leaders of a coalition that supports the Yucca Mountain repository Thursday began applying pressure on Democratic Sen. Harry Reid, charging that he is "abusing" his new powers as Senate majority leader by pledging to block votes on the Nevada nuclear waste project. Reid, who will lead the Senate when it reconvenes in January, was challenged to allow debate and votes on "fix Yucca Mountain" bills that might pass even though he adamantly opposes them. By refusing to schedule votes, the Nevadan is putting parochial interests before the needs of the nation to relocate radioactive spent fuel away from communities, and the desires of fellow Democrats who have nuclear waste piling up in their states, the repository advocates said. "When (Reid) is leading the majority, he has to act in the best interests of the majority, and the best interests of the majority is to move nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain," said LeRoy Koppendrayer, chairman of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

<http://www.pahrumpvalleytimes.com/2006/Dec-06-Wed-2006/news/11226057.html>

December 6, 2006

Report sparks debate over weapons programs, Some question the need for new plutonium pits, The Free New Mexican

A new report is fueling debate over nuclear weapons programs that could someday be housed at Los Alamos National Laboratory and draw millions of dollars to Northern New Mexico. Los Alamos has been identified as one of five possible sites for a new center to build plutonium pits -- the triggers at the core of the country's nuclear weapons. However, the National Nuclear Security Administration this week said scientists have determined the country's existing stockpile of plutonium pits should last decades longer than previously believed. Supporters say it's good to have replacement parts and new designs in the nuclear-weapons stockpile. Others, however, say it's not necessary, or it could set a bad example to the rest of the world. The announcement adds a new element to the debate over whether the country should build more triggers and new warheads in the coming years.

<http://www.freewmexican.com/news/52969.html#>

December 6, 2006

Nuclear waste rail line to Yucca Mountain divides Nevada towns, *San Luis Obispo Tribune*

SILVER SPRINGS – June Mick fled to this rural Lyon County community six months ago to get away from the crime and high costs of south Florida. She and her husband paid \$230,000 for a manufactured home and 4.7 acres of jackrabbits and sagebrush near an infrequently used railroad track about 40 miles east of Carson City. Only recently did Mick learn the track in her backyard was under study as the rail line on which Energy Department trains would carry high-level nuclear waste to Yucca Mountain, including from the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant near Avila Beach. "I don't want that stuff," she said. "What if there is an accident? There is no telling what could happen." Mick's thoughts were shared by neighbors a few blocks away. <http://www.sanluisobispo.com/mld/sanluisobispo/16177753.htm>

December 4, 2006

Analysis: Reid's Yucca and nuke waste plan, *United Press International*

WASHINGTON – Sen. Harry Reid becomes the most powerful person in the U.S. Senate next month and the Nevada Democrat says he'll oversee the killing of a decades-long, multibillion dollar plan to store nuclear waste inside a mountain in his state. Fellow opponents of the Yucca Mountain Project say the site is unsafe to hold spent nuclear fuel and transporting it there is a security risk. The nuclear industry calls it a business liability if nuclear waste isn't taken off its hands, warning it may hinder a resurgence of nuclear power in the country. But after three decades of exploration at Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas, and \$10 billion (15 percent of the project's total expected cost for its first 100 years), the U.S. Energy Department is 20 years behind schedule to get federal regulator approval for the site, let alone open it. "Yucca Mountain is dead. It'll never happen," Reid told *United Press International* in an exclusive interview in his Las Vegas office. <http://www.upi.com/Energy/view.php?StoryID=20061204-033735-1872r>