

PROBLEMS WITH LAW AND POLICY SURROUNDING THE STORAGE OF
RADIOACTIVE WASTE AT THE YUCCA MOUNTAIN REPOSITORY

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Abstract

In 1957 the US National Academy of Sciences determined that geological repository is the safest method to permanently store the US's spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Spent nuclear fuel comes from the nuclear power industry, and high-level radioactive waste comes from the defense industry, but some high-level waste is generated from the nuclear power industry. The Department of Energy (DOE) was chosen to locate, research, construct and regulate a geological repository. Along with the DOE four other government agencies were chosen to help set regulations for the geological repository. After decades of testing, Yucca Mountain, Nevada was chosen as the only site to be considered to host the US's permanent geological repository. Though in 2002 President George W. Bush and Congress signed to allow Yucca Mountain to be used as a geological repository, until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issues a license for Yucca Mountain, the site is just being "considered" for repository. While Yucca Mountain is under consideration for geological repository it has been named "The Yucca Mountain Project". Controversy has surrounded the Yucca Mountain Project since the beginning of the project in the 1980's. Much of the controversy stems from decisions that are made politically and not scientifically. This paper will cover the problems with regulation surrounding radioactive waste storage at Yucca Mountain, and determine whether or not the repository can safely house the US's spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste permanently.