

# Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board

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## Role of the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board

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NARUC Summer Meeting  
July 21, 2008

# About the Board

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- The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board is an independent federal agency created by Congress in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987
- The Board's 11 members serve part-time and are appointed by the President from a slate of nominees submitted by the National Academy of Sciences
- The Board is required to report its findings and recommendations to Congress and the Secretary of Energy at least 2 times per year

# Congressional Mandate

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- The NWPAA directs the Board to evaluate the technical and scientific validity of activities undertaken by the Secretary of Energy [to implement the Nuclear Waste Policy Act], including
  - (1) site characterization activities; and
  - (2) activities relating to the packaging or transportation of high-level radioactive waste or spent nuclear fuel

# Purpose of the Board

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- According to the legislative history, the purpose of the Board is to perform an ongoing technical and scientific peer review of DOE activities and to provide a source of independent and expert advice to DOE and Congress on technical issues
- Congress intended the Board to make its recommendations before decisions are made by DOE, not after the fact

# Board Role Going Forward

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## The Board:

- uses its broad expertise to take an integrated view of the diverse elements of the waste management system
- focuses on fundamental understanding and validity of the science as opposed to regulatory compliance
- evaluates whether the waste management system will “work,” based on answers to the following questions:

## Questions Addressed by the Board

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- Can DOE effectively implement the design and fabrication of waste packages; accept spent fuel at reactor sites or high-level waste at federal facilities; transport waste to the repository; perform necessary surface operations, including storage, and emplace waste packages and drip shields underground?
- How strong is DOE's technical basis supporting its assessment that the engineered and natural barriers will perform their intended function as designed?

## What the Board Does *Not* Do

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The Board does not:

- make policy recommendations
- have a stake in the outcome of the deliberations over Yucca Mountain beyond the validity of the science (the Board is not a “stakeholder”)

## Accessing the Board's Technical Review

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- Most of the Board's public meetings are held in Nevada
- The Board's letters, reports, meeting transcripts, congressional testimony, and other official documents are available on the Board's web site: [www.nwtrb.gov](http://www.nwtrb.gov), and can be used by all parties to the licensing process