

## Yucca could hold up to 9 times more waste

*Absolutely true but it would delay this solution to the waste issue. Redesign the expansion instead.*

North Lake Tahoe Bonanza  
April 23, 2006

The planned Yucca Mountain repository could hold up to nine times more nuclear waste if it were expanded and redesigned – equal to about twice as much waste as is stored globally now, according to an industry report previewed Wednesday.

Early results of an ongoing study indicate at least 286,000 tons and possibly as many as 628,000 tons of used nuclear fuel could be stored at the Nevada site if it were reconfigured, authors said at a briefing.

That would dwarf the current legal limit of 77,000 tons. The study assumes the repository area could be doubled, and that storage tunnels could be grouped or carved into multiple levels of the mountain.

"These are numbers that are draining the blood from the faces of many people who say, 'Wow, that is a lot,'" lead author Mick Apted said at a briefing for members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's nuclear waste advisory board.

The study is expected to stoke debate about a new Bush administration bill that seeks to lift the official capacity at Yucca Mountain and speed repository development to encourage more nuclear power plant construction.

There are about 50,000 tons of nuclear waste stored at power plants in the United States, according to the Department of Energy. The Nuclear Energy Institute estimates about 313,000 tons of nuclear waste are stored worldwide.

The World Nuclear Association reports high-level waste is accumulating at 12,000 tons a year.

Marty Malsch, an attorney who represents the state of Nevada in nuclear waste matters, said the higher capacity would enable Yucca Mountain "to hold all the nuclear waste in the world."

The Yucca study is being performed by the Electric Power Research Institute, the research arm of the utility industry. A preliminary draft is expected to be published in May while analysts continue to delve into the topic, said John Kessler, the institute's high level waste manager.

Malsch said the study appears part of a nuclear industry drive to persuade Congress to lift the capacity limit at Yucca Mountain.

Per Peterson, a nuclear engineering professor at the University of California at Berkeley, said he is skeptical of tiered designs for Yucca Mountain, as well as expanding the repository to a large capacity.

The Energy Department believes the 77,000 ton repository cap, which was set by Congress in 1982, is an "arbitrary limit," spokesman Craig Stevens said in an e-mail. "We

already know that the true capacity of Yucca Mountain is significantly greater, that's why we've asked for a change in the law," Stevens said.

Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., thinks President Bush should be asked about expanding Yucca Mountain when he appears in Las Vegas on Monday, her spokesman David Cherry said.

"Congresswoman Berkley has already said that President Bush wants to make Nevada a global nuclear garbage dump and these findings only add fuel to the fire," Cherry said.