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## Nuclear Waste. Ames. Are You Worried?

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# Nuclear Waste. Ames. Are You Worried?

ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY YES. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY SAYS NO.

story by | ANNA HOLLAND

**M**ore than 1,000 feet beneath the Nevada desert, deep in the heart of Yucca Mountain, lies a winding maze of tunnels.

For now, it is nothing but a gigantic pit — a gaping hole in the middle of nowhere. But in a decade, if the Department of Energy has its way, Yucca Mountain will become the eternal resting place of 70,000 tons of nuclear waste — consolidating in one location the nuclear leftovers from 131 sites in 39 states.

Though Yucca Mountain is 1,500 miles away from Ames, environmentalists here are terrified.

They're scared because when they begin to fill the pit in 2010, that waste will have to make its way to Nevada by trucks and trains that will pass right through Ames.

The DOE, which did not respond to **ethos'** numerous phone calls, has not yet finalized shipping routes, but the waste will undoubtedly pass through

Story County — either aboard trains traveling west from plants along the East Coast and south from sites in Minnesota and Wisconsin along Union Pacific rails or by trucks hauling it south along Interstate 35.

An analysis by Comprehensive Planning Division in Clark County, Nevada found that waste would travel through 734 counties with a total population of 138 million in 43 states.

Merle Prater, a local retired electrical engineer and schoolteacher turned environmental activist, calls Yucca Mountain a “very, very dangerous operation.”

“Transportation over highway and railroad is very susceptible to terrorists,” Prater says. “One cask of that stuff could lay waste to 100 square miles. That would kill and injure a lot of people.”

Proponents argue that consolidating nuclear waste in one location will decrease the damage of another terrorist attack.

“We can no longer afford to continue

storing nuclear waste in temporary sites that are too often located near densely populated areas and water supplies,” said U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, in a debate before the Senate in July. “It seems only logical to want to safeguard public health and safety by storing nuclear waste at a site that would be highly guarded against any terrorist activity.”

No it doesn't, Prater says. Yucca Mountain provides a better opportunity for would-be terrorists.

“A bazooka or a projectile shot into one of these transporters by a terrorist would wreak havoc,” he says. “It's easier to protect 78 nuclear plants than it is to protect thousands of miles of railroad tracks and highways.”

But Grassley said consolidating the waste in a remote location is the best way to prevent destruction of a terrorist attack.

“Spent fuel in secure transit to a permanent repository is far less of a target



this semester at

# the Maintenance Shop



Monday,  
October 21

**Bob Mould**  
Fall 2002 Solo Tour

than the spent fuel scattered across the country," he said.

Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack has also voiced approval of the Yucca Mountain proposal. He says Iowa is prepared for the shipments of nuclear waste.

"History provides us an outstanding record of transportation of nuclear material," he said in a May 8 letter to Grassley. "The state of Iowa ... has consistently met its responsibilities in this regard."

Prater swears no one is ready for a spill — particularly Iowa.

"Nuclear power is a genie the government has let out of the bottle," he says. "The problem is, no one knows how to put it back."

For the moment, Yucca Mountain is still far away. Though Congress and President Bush approved the DOE's site recommendation in July — a recommendation Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham made after spending \$4 billion on research to make sure the site is "scientifically sound" and "technically suitable" — the State of Nevada is fighting the plan in court. Gov. Kenny Quinn has threatened to take it all the way to the Supreme Court.

The DOE now has to apply for a permit from the Nuclear Regulation Commission, and it claims the application will not be complete until December 2004. **e**

**Wednesday, October 16-** Grandma Mojo's Moonshine Revival- 10 PM- \$1 at the door

**Friday, October 18-** Brenda Weiler- 9 PM- \$7 students, \$10 public  
Tickets on sale NOW!

**Saturday, October 19-** Second City Comedy Troupe- 7:30 & 10 PM- \$9 students, \$14 public.

Tickets on sale to students NOW

**Monday, October 21-** Bob Mould- 8 PM- \$15 students, \$18 public  
Tickets on sale NOW!

**Friday, October 25-** Thrice & Hot Water Music- 7 PM- \$11 students, \$12 public

Opening act: Coheed and Cambria.

Tickets on sale to students NOW

**Wednesday, October 30-** Grandma Mojo's Moonshine Revival- 10 PM- \$1 at the door

**Saturday, November 2-** Pointy Teeth- 9 PM- \$5 students, \$7 public  
Opening act: DJ Warren Scott.

Tickets on sale NOW!

**Friday, November 8-** The Kinsey Report- 9 PM.- \$9 students, \$13 public  
Opening act: Jeff Lang. Tickets on sale NOW!

**Saturday, November 9-** oh my god. -9 PM- \$5 students, \$6 public  
Tickets on sale NOW!

**Wednesday, November 13-** Grandma Mojo's Moonshine Revival- 10 PM- \$1 at the door

**Thursday, November 14-** Mountain Goats w/ John Vanderslice- 7:30 PM- \$5 students, \$7 public. Opening act: The Baptist Generals

Tickets on sale NOW!

**Friday, November 15-** Cheryl Wheeler- 8 PM- \$6 students, \$10 public  
Tickets on sale NOW!

**Wednesday, December 4-** Grandma Mojoes Moonshine Revival- 10 PM- \$1 at the door

**Friday, December 6-** Dave Zollo- 9 PM- \$7 students, \$9 public  
Tickets on sale NOW!

**Saturday, December 7-** Dar Williams- 8 PM- \$18 students, \$23 public  
Tickets on sale to students October 7, and the public October 14.