



Survey shows most Americans oppose Yucca Mountain

Geoff dornan

Appeal Capitol Bureau, gdornan@nevadaappeal.com

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A national survey by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shows only one in five Americans believes Yucca Mountain should be used to store nuclear waste.

The survey of attitudes toward different types of power says the primary reason for national opposition to nuclear power is the problem of handling nuclear waste.

"Waste storage is a show-stopper for nuclear power," the survey concluded. "Much of the opposition to this fuel stems from waste."

The poll, conducted in February, sampled 1,200 people and found that only 28 percent of those surveyed believe nuclear waste can be stored safely for long periods.

Just 19 percent thought Yucca Mountain should be used to store that waste, while another 25 percent said it should be used "only if the state of Nevada assents."

Bob Loux, head of Nevada's Agency for Nuclear Projects, said those results are far different than the polls taken by those in the nuclear power industry.

"I think this is the first independent nationwide poll I've seen that included Yucca," he said. "Before, I'd seen industry polls saying a lot of people support it."

"We were pleasantly surprised with the results," Loux said.

He said he was especially happy with the 25 percent of those polled who said they would only support building a dump at Yucca Mountain if Nevada approved it.

"That shows clear concern that the state's rights would be trampled in this process," he said. "You'd assume everybody would want to dump on Nevada. We were pleasantly surprised to see that's not the case."

A total of 39 percent of those polled said Yucca Mountain shouldn't be used at all.

Loux said he hopes the Department of Energy and Congress pay attention to the poll.

The poll also found that support for expanding nuclear power generation would increase substantially if a way were found to deal with the toxic waste. And reprocessing waste "proved highly popular," according to the survey with 60 percent saying they support expanding the Department of Energy's reprocessing program, and 50 percent saying they would support a significant expansion of nuclear energy in the U.S. if the country reprocessed the fuel as is done in France and Japan.

Nuclear wasn't the least popular method of generating energy, the poll found. Oil is at the bottom with 74 percent of those polled calling for reduction of dependence on oil. Coal followed that with less than 19 percent calling for more coal generation.

Nuclear was third with 39 percent wanting less use but nearly 36 percent recommending increased generation. That indicates a notable growth in support for nuclear power since MIT's last energy poll in 2002.

Most popular were solar and wind with three-quarters of those polled saying those sources of power should be increased.

- Contact reporter Geoff Dornan at gdornan@nevadaappeal.com or 687-8750.

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