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Yucca Mountain Public Outreach Communication Plan

Prepared for the
City of Las Vegas



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City of Las Vegas

Yucca Mountain Communication Plan

Introduction

Nevada was selected as the site for a national high-level nuclear waste repository nearly 20 years ago. State and local governments have opposed it ever since. The City of Las Vegas receives funds to conduct monitoring, public outreach and oversight activities. This Communication Plan is intended to provide a strategic management tool to direct the public outreach and informational needs of City residents about Yucca Mountain.

The communication plan should be an adaptable, flexible document that can be modified should situational variables impact significantly on desired outputs and outcomes.

Research

Each City council member and Mayor Oscar Goodman were interviewed to determine perspectives and relevance to each ward of the City. It is clear from these brief interviews that the Yucca Mountain Project is, in their words, an “important” issue facing the City of Las Vegas. It also is clear that city officials contacted believe that the City needs to be more “assertive” and “proactive” with respect to its public outreach efforts regarding Yucca Mountain.

All elected officials agree that communication from the City of Las Vegas about Yucca Mountain must be accurate, credible, and educational. In past years, the City’s Yucca Mountain public outreach has been primarily reactive, due mostly to competing constituent agendas.

All council members expressed their respective staunch opposition to the Yucca Mountain Project. They also expressed an interest in receiving periodic information and talking points so they can communicate to their constituents on an as-needed basis.

One council member recommended that the City work more closely with Clark County in a coordinated public outreach effort reach out to as many people as possible.

It should be noted that the City has a Yucca Mountain Nuclear Repository Committee; however, the committee meets infrequently.

Challenges

Right now public apathy is the City’s biggest challenge when it comes to Yucca Mountain. Yucca Mountain will not be prepared to accept high-level radioactive waste until at least 2017, or later (if ever). Inasmuch as Yucca Mountain is not on today’s radar screen for the average citizen, it can be somewhat challenging to incorporate Yucca Mountain updates during constituent dialogues when time and resources are limited.

Thus, the City's "reactive" posture with respect to Yucca Mountain can be attributed to citizens worried about more immediate concerns such as zoning issues, the homeless, healthcare, public safety, the environment, population growth, tourism, the economy, etc.

In essence, the Yucca Mountain Project is considered a non-issue in some wards because of the project's lack of immediacy. For some council members this is frustrating because aspects of the Yucca Mountain Project eventually could be detrimental to the City's economy, i.e. transportation of high-level radioactive waste. As one council member said, "The public is numb to Yucca Mountain."

Nevertheless, this perceived public apathy is not universal and is worth fighting. As one council member phrased it, "Acting today protects us for tomorrow," citing Interstate 95 as one example of poor strategic long-term planning. Another council member said that the City has an obligation to its citizens to keep them up-to-date with information about the project. The Council as a whole believes that the City has an obligation to inform and protect today's citizens as well as future generations. The City should "be very assertive" and "more active" in making information about the Yucca Mountain Project available to the public. "We have an obligation to preserve the integrity of our future," said another person interviewed.

Still another council member noted the City needs to help its residents understand that dealing with issues such as Yucca Mountain today, will help the quality of life for future generations.

The general consensus among those interviewed is that the City should:

- Be more assertive in its Yucca Mountain Project public outreach efforts;
- Seek out opportunities to coordinate public outreach efforts with Clark County;
- Yucca Mountain is an extremely important issue for Las Vegas' future.

Situation Analysis

The City's current Yucca Mountain public outreach efforts include information on its Web site, a newly revised exhibit, and various collateral materials. At the present time, most of the City's Yucca Mountain public outreach efforts are being managed, coordinated, and implemented by one person. These efforts include participation as vice chair of the Clark County Yucca Mountain Advisory Committee, attendance at nuclear waste-related seminars and workshops, as well as limited representation at local fairs and trade shows with the City's Yucca Mountain display.

There are existing mediums available to the various wards to get the word out about Yucca Mountain, including but not limited to coffee klatches, neighborhood meetings, shows on Channel 2, e-mails, newsletters, fairs, holiday-specific events, trade shows, and site-specific speaking appearances.

Goals

- ➔ Increase public awareness about the Yucca Mountain Project.
- ➔ Increase the local media awareness about the City's position on Yucca Mountain.
- ➔ Solicit public feedback and opinions about Yucca Mountain.
- ➔ Collect and evaluate public concerns about Yucca Mountain.
- ➔ Position the City of Las Vegas as a leading organizational entity representing the public interest with respect to Yucca Mountain.

Objectives

- ✓ Review and revise as necessary all existing Yucca Mountain public outreach materials.
- ✓ Seek out venues in each ward where Yucca Mountain materials can be distributed.
- ✓ Develop new outreach tools to assist council members in public outreach efforts.
- ✓ Develop communication tools to reach minority audiences

Thematic Approach/Tonality

The approach for all Yucca Mountain communication should be educational in tone. Accuracy, honesty, and credibility will be the key characteristics of the City's communication on this issue. Information will not be conveyed in an alarming or emotionally driven manner.

Key Audiences

The City's communication strategy should focus on four key areas:

- (1) City employees
- (2) General public
- (3) Hispanic and Asian communities
- (4) Local media

Rationale

From a credibility perspective, any new public awareness campaign must start by informing employees; this has two advantages. First, it creates an informal network of communication ambassadors, and second, it contributes to the creation of consistent messaging as the city expands its public awareness activities.

A key element of this strategy would include presenting the key messages to the Las Vegas City Council for approval. This could have the dual effect of generating some publicity, as well as demonstrating to all employees the City's staunch and continuing commitment to fight the Yucca Mountain Project.

The general public in respective wards is an obvious and key target audience. Further, given the City's demographics, the Hispanic and Asian communities specifically should

be addressed. It can be said that minority communities have more immediate concerns to deal with on a daily basis; however, this can be said for everyone living in Las Vegas. In the words of Vernon Cooper, "These days people seek knowledge, not wisdom. Knowledge is of the past, wisdom is of the future."

With respect to the media, it's simply imperative to get the City's message out to the local media. Consistent and credible communication to reporters who cover the Yucca Mountain Project is essential in establishing and enhancing the City's leadership position with respect to the Yucca Mountain Project.

Key Messages

Primary Message #1

- The City of Las Vegas opposes the Yucca Mountain Project.

Supporting Statement

- The City of Las Vegas supports the on-site storage of spent nuclear fuel.

Primary Message#2

- The City of Las Vegas opposes any effort that would allow the transportation of radioactive waste through or near the City.

Supporting Statement #1

- The Department of Energy estimates three “accidents” over the course of the transportation phase where radiation is released.

Supporting Statement #2

- The solution to storing nuclear waste is a national problem, not a Nevada problem.

Primary Message #3

The transportation of high-level radioactive waste is a danger to public safety.

Supporting Statement

- The Department of Energy estimates at least two “incidents” per year.

Target Audiences

Primary audiences for information on Yucca Mountain include:

Internal:

- City employees
- Liaison and support staff to Council members
- Council

External:

- General public
- Local media

Ethnic considerations:

- Hispanic (Spanish language translations)
- Asian communities

Tactics and Recommendations

Internal

- Staff training session at monthly briefing session
- Develop talking points for public outreach personnel use
- Present key messages to City Council for approval
- E-mail updates for Council and Staff
- Briefing manual for Council
- Speaker training for staff members
- Build stable of staff members capable of managing exhibit booth at special events
- Organize a Yucca tour specifically for City Council
- Present key messages and supporting statements to the City Council for formal approval
- Conduct a series of focus groups to identify and clarify public perceptions about the Yucca Mountain Project
- Conduct a staff training workshop on Yucca Mountain at a MCM briefing session
- Develop a stable of staff members capable of managing the City's Yucca Mountain exhibit to augment existing staff
- Posters

External

- Spanish language for fact sheets in certain wards
- Update Web site
- Establish a "Yucca Facts" link to the City's existing Web site
- Set up the City's Yucca Mountain exhibit in the bridge lobby area
- Develop e-mail updates
- Print advertisements
- Brochures
- Direct mail
- Newsletters
- Fact sheets
- Movie theater ads
- Podcasts
- Neighborhood meetings/town hall meetings/site-specific meetings
- Trade shows
- Senior events
- Special events
- Public workshop/Poster sessions
- Exhibits/displays
- Billboards
- Bus stop posters
- Op ed articles (the first to be written by Mayor Oscar Goodman)
- Guest columns
- Citizens Academy presentations
- Speeches
- Videos
- Television/Access Las Vegas appearances

City Council Input

Tactics to develop

Elected City officials requested the following communication tactics:

- Talking points—(Every Council member requested credible, current information)
- Fact sheets – in both English and Spanish
- E-mail briefings for staff and Council members
- E-mail updates for residents
- Staff training on Yucca Mountain issues
- Displays for ward events with handouts available to interested residents
- Articles targeting various audiences, including:
 - a. Publications that emphasize family and future generations
 - b. Publications for seniors
 - c. Publications geared to homeowners associations
 - d. Publications for construction-related jobs
 - e. Publications for Spanish language speakers
- Video package for Spanish TV stations
- Support for appearances on the City's cable TV shows.

Key existing communication methods

Council members are currently using these methods for primary contacts with residents:

- E-mail
- Town Hall meetings
- Neighborhood association meetings
- Personal contacts
- Newsletters
- Special events
- Ward tours
- Telephone contacts
- Access Las Vegas television show
- Direct mail
- "Meet the councilman" breakfasts
- Information Fair
- Homeowner's association meetings

Training

Three types of training are recommended for all personnel who have contact with the public and the media.

- A 30-minute MCM briefing that would provide updated information on the project's status given by a Yucca Mountain subject matter expert.
- A two-hour refresher course on media relations/spokesperson training.
- A two-hour refresher course on presentation skills for those employees who make public presentations or volunteer to staff the city's Yucca Mountain exhibit.

Special Event Recommendations

Nov. 2, 2006	Information Fair, Ward 6	
April 12-15, 2007	Clark County Fair, Logandale	(in county tent)
April 28, 2007	Summerlin Earth Faire, Summerlin Park	
May 5, 2007	Boy Scout Expo, Lorenzi Park	
June 2007	Las Vegas Chamber Expo, Cashman Center	(\$250)
June 2007	Latin Chamber Expo, Cashman Center	(\$300)
November 2007	World of Women Expo	(\$100)

CITY OF LAS VEGAS

WHY IS THE CITY OF LAS VEGAS OPPOSED?

❖ **PUBLIC SAFETY:** There are too many unanswered questions about this project that could adversely affect our residents and visitors.

❖ **COSTS:** The price tag to provide vital services for public safety preparedness, including additional emergency equipment, personnel and specialized training could cost the city millions of dollars.

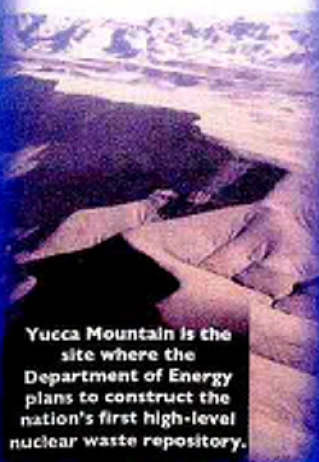
❖ **TOURISM:** Our local economy could be drastically affected in case of a radiological accident in or near Las Vegas.

❖ **PROPERTY VALUES:** A nuclear accident could seriously impact land and home values along DOE's transportation routes.

❖ **SOUND SCIENCE:** Many geologic and technical problems are still not resolved. Issues involving the safe transportation and long-term storage of high-level nuclear waste are complex and remain the focus of scientific debate.

WHAT IS YUCCA MOUNTAIN?

Yucca Mountain is a ridge of volcanic rock about 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas in Nye County.



Yucca Mountain is the site where the Department of Energy plans to construct the nation's first high-level nuclear waste repository.

WHAT ABOUT TRANSPORTATION OF HIGH-LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE?

The DOE plans to ship at least 77,000 metric tons of high-level nuclear waste thousands of miles, through 43 states, over a 40-year period.

Currently the DOE has identified the interstate highway system as routes for truck shipments of high-level nuclear waste, including I-15. If the Yucca Mountain repository is built, nearly each state in America must designate specific routes for heavy-haul trucks. While DOE indicates a preference for rail shipments, specific routes are not yet selected.



For more information, visit the city's Web site at www.lasvegasnevada.gov

Internet Tools

Web site

The City's existing Web site is excellent; however, the Yucca Mountain page is insufficient in terms of content and timeliness. We recommend adding a comprehensive timeline, updated information on key issues, data on transportation routes, and potential impacts to the City of Las Vegas residents.

The City participates in Clark County's Monitoring Program—we recommend a link to that Web site to encourage residents to access economic indicators.

The City's *own* Yucca Mountain fact sheets should be added to the site. Currently, the only fact sheets referenced online are links to NEI, DOE, and EPA.

E-mail

Virtually every Council member mentioned e-mail as a communication method of reaching constituents. Some members build substantial data bases of e-mail addresses. This medium could be enriched by offering occasional e-mail blurbs about Yucca Mountain to Council members for consideration to include with their personal messages to residents.

Podcasts

Produce a podcast with Mayor Goodman on this subject as part of the regularly produced Clark County Yucca Mountain Podcast, and then link directly to that site on the City Web site.

Electronic Newsletter

Produce a Yucca Mountain newsletter which can be sent to people who request information from the City.

Tactics Timeline and Recommendations for 2006-2007

September 2006	Fact Sheets
October 2006	Develop talking points
Nov. 7, 2006	City of Las Vegas Yucca Mountain Nuclear Repository Committee
Nov. 15, 2006	Report to City Council on Yucca Mountain Communication Plan
Nov. 17, 2006	MCM presentation—for consistent messaging, conduct a briefing for staff on the major issues connected to Yucca Mountain
November 2006	Public Service Announcement production
December 2006	Develop video package concept (channel 2), storyboards
January 8-9, 2007	Conduct citizen focus groups to test messages, video concept
February 2007	Update City Web site copy
Feb/March 2007	Shoot video package for broadcast on City Beat
June 2007	Update/revise fact sheets
Ongoing	E-mail updates via Clark County electronic newsletter
Ongoing	Booth at special events and display set-up at various ward town hall meetings and other functions, based on Council requests.
Major event response: Op-ed for Mayor Goodman	

**Recommended Budget
July 2006-June 2007 Yucca Mountain Oversight**

Allocation through Clark County = \$90,000 (\$60,000 for monitoring program)

Staff-project management	\$12,200
Communication plan	3,500
Special events:	
Booth fees	650
Booth management	3,200
Fact sheets, templates	1,500
Talking points for council members	1,500
PSA production	1,500
Web site update (research, writing only)	1,000
Op-ed piece for Mayor Goodman	500
Video package	<u>4,000</u>
Total	\$ 29,550

Evaluation

Public outreach efforts can be measured by the following methods:

- Document e-mail communication
- Document number of Yucca Facts Web site hits
- Document number of people who visit the City's Yucca Mountain exhibit
- Document number of events attended
- Document and analyze comments/feedback at public forums
- Document number of presentations given and audiences reached
- Document number of community fairs/neighborhood meetings and audiences reached
- Document number of television appearances given
- Document quality/quantity of media coverage
- Document number of publications disseminated

Brief Yucca Mountain Project Historical Overview

In 1954 Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, directing the federal government to promote the peaceful use of atomic energy, with the understanding that disposal of the highly radioactive waste produced would be the responsibility of the federal government.

Two years later, the National Academy of Sciences recommended deep geologic disposal as the preferred method of disposing of nuclear waste produced by the growing nuclear reactor industry.

After India detonated a nuclear device with plutonium in 1974, President Gerald Ford banned a plan by the U.S. nuclear industry to reprocess nuclear waste in fast breeder reactors. Ford "indefinitely deferred" reprocessing, and President Jimmy Carter continued the ban, designed as an example for other countries to avoid possible diversion of plutonium for nuclear weapons.

In 1982 Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which established a repository site screening process, requiring two separate repositories to assure geographic/regional equity. The NWPA also established a schedule leading to federal waste acceptance for disposal beginning in 1998. Further, the NWPA started the Nuclear Waste Fund to pay for the waste program with fees collected from utilities generating electricity from nuclear power plants.

The following year, the Department of Energy named nine previously screened potential repository sites in six states: seven in salt deposits, and two on western federal nuclear facility sites (including the Nevada Test Site) in volcanic rock deposits.

In 1986 the DOE nominates five candidate repository sites from the original nine, and then selects three western sites in Nevada, Texas and Washington for detailed investigation, from which one would be selected for repository licensing.

The next year, Congress amended the NWPA, designating Yucca Mountain as the only repository site to be studied as an acceptable location to store 77,000 metric tons of high-level radioactive waste.

In 1994 the portal entrance to the Exploratory Studies Facility was constructed, and tunneling into Yucca Mountain started. The Tunnel Boring Machine broke through the five-mile long tunnel in 1997. DOE fails to meet its January deadline for nuclear waste acceptance, and lawsuits are filed by states and the nuclear industry.

In the past decade, the project has been fraught with problems, including but not limited to: project delays, missed deadlines, questionable science, possible design flaws, questions about possible fabricated and falsified data by U.S. Geological Survey employees, and safety concerns by local native American tribes.

In testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality in July 2006, Ward Sprout, director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, officially announced a revised timeline for the Yucca Mountain Project, including the submission of a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to later than June 30, 2008.

Additionally, Sprout said that if "requested legislative changes are enacted," that the repository would be able to accept spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste in early 2017, nearly two decades behind its original schedule. The project's price tag to date: \$8 billion.