

Solving the Nuclear Waste Problem in the US

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With nuclear energy in the U.S. positioned to make a comeback, the need to find a permanent solution for the spent nuclear fuel from commercial nuclear power plants is more important than ever. It is time to make bold changes in the way the U.S. manages and disposes of the spent nuclear fuel from nuclear power plants and high-level radioactive waste from nuclear weapons production or other sources.

While the U.S. has safely stored spent nuclear fuel at reactor sites for decades, such storage is a temporary measure and spent fuel must be moved from the more than 76 interim surface storage sites to one or more deep geologic repositories for final disposal.

The U.S. had a plan to dispose of nuclear waste codified in the 1982 Nuclear Waste Policy Act, but 44 years later, we are no closer to a final solution for nuclear waste than we were then. The amended Act identified Yucca Mountain, Nevada, as a potential site for a geologic repository to hold the waste. The site never received a license to operate and Congress stopped funding the site 16 years ago. The American taxpayer is now on the hook for tens of billions of dollars to pay for temporary spent fuel storage at nuclear reactors since the Department of Energy, the agency tasked with finding, developing, and operating a repository, was unable to do so.

To formulate a solution to this conundrum, we gathered a bipartisan group of nuclear waste experts, all of whom have worked on this issue for many years. They included representatives of the nuclear industry, former government officials, members of public interest groups, academics, and representatives of states, communities where spent fuel and high-level wastes is currently stored, and Native American Tribes. The result we agreed to can be found at [Path Forward 2026](#).

Our proposed solution is straightforward. Instead of asking a federal agency like the Department of Energy with its constraints and competing priorities, we turn to experts: the nuclear industry. The organization that implements nuclear waste management and disposal should be the one that made the waste and knows how to manage it safely. An independent nuclear reactor owner-led corporation, a NuCorp, or *Nuclear Corporation*, would work for the public benefit of final nuclear waste disposal.

NuCorp would be required by federal legislation and established by reactor owners. It would be federally chartered with a governing Board of Directors. NuCorp would be responsible for the management, transportation, possible storage, preparation for disposal, and disposal of commercial spent nuclear fuel, specifically all waste that is covered by the existing standard contracts under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. NuCorp would also be authorized to enter into disposal contracts with new reactor licensees, to

dispose of spent fuel or high-level waste from their operations. And should the Energy Department or other federal entities choose to use its services, NuCorp would be available to contract with them.

Independent oversight would be provided by an Advisory Committee that reflected a broad range of expertise and interests, including technical expertise as well as representatives of affected local, state, and Tribal governments. For openness and transparency, the Advisory Committee would be required to report periodically to Congress, the Board of Directors, and the public. The repository and any storage facilities would be required to be licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which would provide safety and security assurance.

NuCorp would be expected to use a collaborative process to establish a site for the repository. It would be required to enter into voluntary hosting agreements for any of its facilities with the host state and local government or Indian Tribe (if the facility is located on Tribal reservations or Trust lands).

NuCorp could decide to develop a limited-volume centralized storage facility for the temporary storage of spent fuel. Such a facility would allow permanently shut down reactors to repurpose their sites, but would not become a de facto final solution.

With the potential dawn of a new nuclear era, our nation needs a new strategy for disposing of our nuclear waste, one that will achieve success. Other countries including Sweden, Finland, Canada, and Switzerland have found success in the NuCorp model, in which the nuclear industry establishes the nuclear waste management organization. All have identified disposal sites and two of them, Finland and Sweden, are actively constructing their repositories. It's time to try this new approach in the U.S. We can do this.

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