



Cabinet of the Minister of State

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PRESS RELEASE

Sustainable Management of Radioactive Waste: Launching of the Campaign to Find a Candidate Disposal Site for Low-level Long-lived Radioactive Waste

The Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Regional Development, has requested the French National Radioactive Waste Agency (*Agence nationale pour la gestion des déchets radioactifs* – Andra) to launch a campaign in order to identify suitable candidate sites for the implementation of a disposal facility for low-level long-lived (LL-LL) radioactive waste. The Ministry entrusted upon Andra to carry out that initiative in an exemplary and transparent fashion by basing itself on the volunteer candidacy of interested territories and in full compliance with local democracy, in order to find ultimately a volunteer commune and territory to host the future disposal site.

One of the purposes of the *Planning Act of 28 June 2006 Concerning the Sustainable Development of Radioactive Materials and Waste* is to commission a disposal facility for LL-LL waste. **Although their radioactivity level is low, those residues must be managed according to specific criteria** compatible with their radioactive half-life. A shallow disposal facility has been selected as the most favourable technical option.

First and foremost, the facility will be designed to accommodate graphite and radium-bearing waste. Graphite waste results from the operation and dismantling of *Électricité de France's* (EDF) graphite-moderated gas-cooled reactors and of other reactors of the French Atomic Energy Commission (*Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* – CEA). Radium-bearing waste originates mainly from the treatment of rare-earth minerals used in the fabrication of electronic components, the manufacturing of catalytic converters in the automotive industry and for various uses in fine metallurgy. Radium-bearing waste also results from historical activities, such as the development of ore-concentration processes and the rehabilitation of industrial sites contaminated with radium.

In June, Andra will issue a call for volunteer communities with potential favourable sites from a geological standpoint.

Applications will be reviewed by the end of 2008 in order to select, if possible, a short list of two or three sites on which Andra will be able to perform comprehensive studies in 2009 and 2010. The *in-situ* investigation phase will be accompanied by exchanges with local elected officials and populations of the areas involved. The results of the public consultation, as well as the integration of the disposal facility within a regional-development project, will constitute significant selection criteria.

The final objective is to select a suitable site by the end of 2010 with a view to submitting the application for the implementation licence of the disposal facility by the end of 2013 and to commissioning the actual facility in 2019.

[Note: This English translation is the sole responsibility of Andra.]

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