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# China's radioactive waste management program

## Low-level radioactive waste

Near surface and above ground disposal have been adopted for low-level radioactive waste management in China. Since nuclear facilities and producers of radioactive waste are distributed in several regions of the country, China sends its radioactive wastes to regional disposal locations.

Four or five repositories for low-level radioactive waste will be constructed in order to dispose of accumulated wastes from the nuclear industry, the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, and from nuclear power plant operation. These wastes will be delivered to the facilities after a five-year interim storage period.

## Reprocessing spent nuclear fuel

Water storage pools at Chinese reactors will cool spent nuclear fuel for 15 years. After removal, the spent nuclear fuel will be sent to other storage pools located away from the reactors before being reprocessed. Liquid radioactive wastes will be vitrified (solidified).

## Deep geologic disposal plans

China is unique in that its repository plans are being developed concurrently with the early stages of nuclear power plant construction. Current plans call for conducting feasibility studies between

2010 and 2020, followed by site licensing. Repository operation will begin no earlier than 2040.

China carried out site screening from 1985-1986, concentrating on social, environmental, and geographical issues. The country is evaluating five potential repository sites, including its proposed underground research laboratory (URL) site in the Gobi Desert. This URL is planned to become operational around the year 2030. Field investigations are under way at the Beishan granite site in the Gansu province of the Gobi Desert in northwest China. The Gobi Desert is sparsely populated, has a low precipitation rate, a high evaporation rate, and a shallow water table.

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Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management

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