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Sweden's SKB Chooses Forsmark for Final Repository Site

3 Jun (NucNet): Swedish nuclear fuel and waste management company SKB has chosen Forsmark as the site for the final repository for Sweden's spent nuclear fuel.

The company made the announcement today. If construction goes ahead as planned, Forsmark could be the world's first permanent disposal site for spent nuclear fuel.

Site works towards the facility could begin in 2013, with full construction starting in 2015 and with possible operation in 2023.

SKB said it chose the site near the Forsmark nuclear plant, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) from Stockholm, after two decades of research. The choice had been between Forsmark in the municipality of Osthrammar and Laxemar in the municipality of Oskarshamn.

All spent nuclear fuel from Swedish nuclear power plants will be disposed of in the final repository in crystalline bedrock at a depth of nearly 500 metres.

The selection of a site is a milestone for the Swedish nuclear waste programme, said SKB president Claes Thegerstrom. He said SKB is focusing on putting together the documentation needed to submit a licence application for constructing the repository.

SKB will complete applications for permits that will be reviewed by the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority and the Environmental Court. The applications will be submitted in 2010 and will include an environmental impact assessment and a safety analysis.

The Forsmark site offers rock at the repository level which is dry and has few fractures. These properties are of "major significance" for long-term safety, SKB said. In addition, a repository in Forsmark would require less space than a repository in Laxemar, which is an advantage. This means that less rock needs to be excavated and less material will be needed for backfilling.

Surface facilities will be constructed in an existing industrial area, which reduces environmental impact.

Apart from the future nuclear fuel repository, the Swedish system for managing spent nuclear fuel will also include the existing Clab interim storage facility at Oskarshamn and an encapsulation plant next to Clab for which SKB has already applied for a building permit.

The selection of the repository site is the result of close to 20 years of work during which SKB has conducted surveys throughout Sweden and feasibility studies in eight municipalities. These were followed by site investigations in Forsmark and Oskarshamn between 2002 to 2007.

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