

**Reset of U.S. Nuclear Waste Management Strategy and Policy:
*The Structure and Behavior of a New Nuclear Waste Management Organization***

The first meeting of the Reset Project was held on the Stanford campus on February 17-18, 2015 (<http://fsi.stanford.edu/events/“reset”-us-nuclear-waste-management>). Three Stanford organizations, the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, the Precourt Institute for Energy, and the Center for International Security and Cooperation, sponsored the meeting. After two days of presentations, the project’s steering committee identified a set of issues that were judged to be critical to the future success of the U.S. nuclear waste program. *A second meeting, September 30 to October 1, 2015, will be held at Stanford. This meeting will focus on one of the identified critical issues: the structure and characteristics of a new waste management organization for the United States.*

Issues associated with the design of a new waste management organization in the United States have been debated for at least 40 years. When Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act in 1982, it instructed the Secretary of Energy to undertake a study of alternative approaches for developing civilian radioactive waste-management facilities, including a deep-mined, geologic repository. Nearly 30 years later, Congress directed the Secretary to carry out another evaluation on alternative organizational arrangements. Neither study resulted in any change from the *status quo*. In 2012, the *Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future* recommended that DOE’s responsibilities for managing radioactive waste be transferred to a new single-purpose organization. To date, Congress has not acted on this recommendation.

Discussions about a new waste management organization have focused on organizational form as the principal determinative factor, typically comparing the *pros* and *cons* of a traditional government agency, an independent government corporation, or a private nuclear utility-owned company. The situation is further complicated by the unique histories of success and failure in other countries. There is no clear evidence for the effectiveness of one organizational structure over another. A critical issue is the design an organization that can accomplish its mission in a complicated environment that requires interacting with and responding to the Federal government, States, and local authorities, as well as the concerned and affected public. Finally, by focusing only on the structure of an organization, its authority and source of funding, equally important questions are overlooked: What factors influence critical organizational behaviors? How can an organization facilitate its credibility and public acceptance? How do organizations learn and evolve in a changing political and social environment?

The Reset Project’s second meeting will focus on a broader exploration of organizational issues:

- (1) How does an implementing organization interact with its technical, political, and legal environments? How does it maintain credibility within each of these three realms?
- (2) How does an implementing organization “learn” over time? How does it adjust to new knowledge and a changing political environment?

The meeting will include presentations by experts in organizational behavior, both scholars and practitioners. In addition, panels representing different perspectives will be held on each day of the meeting. Considerable time will be set aside for discussion and audience participation.