

PRESS RELEASE

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About Andra

The French National Radioactive Waste Management Agency (*Agence nationale pour la gestion des déchets radioactifs - Andra*) is a public industrial and commercial establishment instituted by the *Law of 30 December 1991*. Its missions were enhanced by the *Planning Act of 28 June 2006 Concerning the Sustainable Management of Radioactive Materials and Waste*.

Andra is independent from radioactive-waste producers and placed under the supervision of the Ministries for Energy, the Environment and Research.

Andra is in charge of ensuring the sustainable management of all French radioactive waste. It provides the French government with its expertise and know-how in order to design management solutions and to operate and to monitor disposal facilities for radioactive waste by protecting human beings and the environment against their effects over the short and long terms.

France is seeking a disposal site for low-level long-lived radioactive waste: Detailed investigations in 2009-10 in two communes of the Aube District

With regard to the search for suitable sites to implement a disposal facility for low-level long-lived (LL-LL) radioactive waste, the French government has selected two communes where in-depth investigations will be conducted in 2009-10: Auxon and Pars-lès-Chavanges, both of which are located in the Aube District. The government has also called for a public debate to be held before the final disposal site is selected in 2011.

In 2009 and 2010, Andra will carry out thorough geological and environmental studies with a view to verifying the feasibility of implementing a shallow disposal facility for LL-LL waste at Auxon and Pars-lès-Chavanges, Aube District. Both sites were chosen among a total of approximately 40 communes that applied to host such disposal facility after Andra had sent them an information file in June 2008.

In order to take its decision, the government relied on the geological and environmental report it received from the Agency at the end of December 2008. Further to the report, the government consulted the French Nuclear Safety Authority (*Autorité de sûreté nucléaire - ASN*) and the National Review Board (*Commission nationale d'évaluation - CNE*), both of which confirmed Andra's report, as well as the elected officials from the territories involved. From those consultations emerged the conclusion that the communes of Auxon and Pars-lès-Chavanges offered the best criteria for the continuation of the project.

Once all investigations are completed, a public debate will be held in 2011 under the aegis of the National Commission on Public Debate (*Commission nationale du débat public*). Before the final site of the future disposal facility is selected, the communes will be invited to discuss the issue in order to confirm or to withdraw their application.

Project highlights

The commissioning of a new disposal facility for LL-LL waste* is one of the objectives prescribed by the *Planning Act of 28 June 2006 Concerning the Sustainable Management of Radioactive Materials and Waste*. Due to the radioactive content and half-lives, such residues must be managed according to a specific method. The preferred technical option is a shallow disposal facility at a depth ranging between 15 and 200 m in special geological formations.

Andra proposed the following preliminary schedule for the siting of the future LL-LL waste disposal facility:

June 2009: Selection of two communes by the French government for hosting detailed studies

2009-10: Geological and environmental investigations. Information and exchanges. Development of territorial projects

2011: Public debate, request for application confirmation. Site selection by the government

End 2011 to 2014: Continuation of investigations and in-depth studies on the selected site, followed by the drafting of the licence application for the creation of the disposal facility

2015-6: Public inquiry and review of the licence application, submission of the building-permit application

2017-9: Subject to the approval of the licence application, beginning of construction and commissioning-licence application for the new disposal facility

* Most LL-LL residues already exist and are currently stored on a temporary basis in surface facilities pending a long-term management solution. They include graphite waste originating from older French nuclear power plants and radium-bearing waste resulting, for instance, from the processing of certain minerals that were used for