

**JOINT CONVENTION ON THE SAFETY OF SPENT  
FUEL MANAGEMENT AND THE SAFETY OF  
RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT**

Negotiations at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) led to the adoption on September 5, 1997, of the *Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management*.

The Convention strengthens the existing system of international nuclear safety standards and norms, with the specific objectives of ensuring that "during all stages of spent fuel and radioactive waste management, there are effective defences against potential hazards so that individuals, society and the environment are protected from harmful effects of ionizing radiation..." and to prevent accidents with radiological consequences should they occur during any stage of spent fuel or radioactive waste management.

Among other things, the Convention obliges states to:

1. take certain measures relating to safety in the siting, the design and construction, and the operation of spent fuel and radioactive waste facilities, as well as the decommissioning of such facilities;
2. take steps to ensure protection against operational radiation and to prevent unplanned releases of radioactive materials, and adopt emergency plans for radiological emergencies;
3. adopt a legislative and regulatory framework to govern the safety of spent fuel and radioactive waste management, and establish a regulatory body entrusted with the implementation of that framework; and
4. report on the measures they have taken to implement their obligations under the Convention.

There are also provisions relating to the transboundary movement of spent fuel and radioactive waste, and the rights and obligations of the state of origin of a shipment, the states of transit and the state of destination of the shipment.

Canada signed and ratified the Convention on May 7, 1998. For the Convention to enter into force, 25 states must ratify it, including 15 states each having an operational nuclear power plant. So far, three states have ratified the Convention, including Canada.