



**The Secretary of Energy**  
Washington, DC 20585

August 2, 2019

The Honorable Steve Sisolak  
Governor of the State of Nevada  
101 North Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sisolak:

Thank you for your July 16 letter regarding the recent earthquakes near Ridgecrest, California. As part of the site characterization for the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain, the Department of Energy (DOE) conducted a Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Assessment (PSHA) for the site and facilities.

The PSHA used a formalized, state-of-the art process to obtain input from many experts on how earthquakes could affect the site and facilities. A number of those experts were from Nevada, particularly from the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and the Nevada Seismological Laboratory (NSL) at UNR.

DOE had a long and productive partnership with the NSL in furthering the understanding of seismicity and seismic response at Yucca Mountain, and throughout Nevada. DOE also has a long and productive partnership with geologists at UNR who, along with colleagues at Caltech and Harvard, helped develop a better understanding of the tectonic setting of eastern California and western Nevada, including the Walker Lane, through the use of Global Positioning System stations.

The PSHA used the best information that was available at that time. Your letter raised an excellent point that if new data are available, a seismic reevaluation would be appropriate and useful. I share this view. Before Congress stopped appropriating funds for the proposed repository, such reevaluations were done annually as part of technical work plans for seismic monitoring. If Congress authorizes and appropriates funding, for storage, those reevaluations would resume. Of course, any such reevaluation conducted would take into account the recent earthquakes in California.

On two occasions after the recent earthquakes, DOE technical staff inspected the 5-mile-long main tunnel of the Exploratory Studies Facility at Yucca Mountain, and no damage was observed.

As indicated in your letter, if the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing proceeding resumes, Nevada will forcefully adjudicate all of its admitted contentions. That proceeding is the legal process designated by Congress to resolve technical disputes fairly and objectively.



I remain confident of the work done by DOE, its National Laboratories, and contractors, including the NSL and UNR, and look forward to participating in the NRC process with Nevada should Congress decide it should resume.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Perry". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop on the "R" and a long tail on the "y".

Rick Perry