

From: Fred Cook <fcook@igc.org>
To: <pgn@nrc.gov>
Date: Sat, Oct 14, 2000 5:56 PM
Subject: Don't relicense nuclear power plants, especially not without local public hearings

65 FR 53047

8-31-00

(84)

To: Patricia Norry, Director,
 Rules and Directives Branch,
 Division of Administrative Services,
 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission,
 Washington DC 20555

Dear Ms. Norris,

If you believe that nuclear power is truly safe, demonstrate that you have sufficient proof getting the Price-Anderson limitation on liability for nuclear accidents repealed. I don't know anyone who thinks this is a serious possibility. Hence, the factual basis and heartfelt urgency of this communication. From a whole systems viewpoint, nuclear power is not even economically attractive.

Re: Draft Report: Generic Aging Lessons Learned
 Nuclear Power Plant Relicensing Procedures

I strenuously oppose the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) plan to allow nuclear reactor owners to obtain 20-year license extensions based primarily on the "Generic Aging Lessons Learned" one-size-fits-all report, with no public hearings. There is no way that the GALL report could adequately cover all that could go wrong with aging reactors. It is time to close the nukes, not give them another 20 years to pollute our communities and run an ever-increasing risk of meltdown.

Extended licenses should not be considered at all, but if they are, they should only be considered case-by-case. The particular ecosystems of each site and surrounding areas should be the primary consideration, followed by the complete and detailed history and prospects of each reactor and each owner-including but not limited to maintenance history, labor practices, financial condition, and responsiveness to public concern. The plants were built with different designs; by different contractors; with all sorts of differences in the conditions of construction, upkeep and retrofits; and current owners have different abilities and willingness to take care of the reactors now and in the future. The impacts of the various electricity deregulation processes in each state should also be taken into account.

It is galling in the extreme that there will be no public hearings in reactor communities for a decision of this magnitude. Holding only one hearing in December 1999 at NRC HQ shows that the NRC has no intention of allowing true public participation.

There should be not one but many public meetings in each city and town within 100 miles of nuclear reactors, to make sure that everyone is aware of the implications of relicensing. At each meeting, and throughout the process, there should be a thorough airing of information about damages caused by radioactive emissions from "normal" nuclear reactor operations. For instance, studies published in May, 2000, show that there are heightened rates of infant mortality and breast cancer in communities near reactors, and that these rates go down when reactors close.

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Add Steve Koenick

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Raj Armand

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There are many generic reasons why license extensions should be denied. Are these fully addressed in the GALL report? Dave Lochbaum, nuclear safety engineer for the Union of Concerned Scientists clearly states the risk: "During the early stage of life and the late stage, the failure rate for both man and machines is generally higher than during middle age; the reliability of both man and machines is generally lower during the early and late stages. The prudent and proper course of action is to retire aging nuclear plants before they reach the point where reliability drops off markedly."

U.S. nuclear power plants were all built with technology that is 30 or 40 years old-and extensively modified so that they bear no relation to their original technical specifications. These souped-up old jalopies are a menace to us all. They should be shut down before they deteriorate further, especially now that nuclear operators are increasingly squeezed by economic uncertainties in the deregulated electric power market. Many are already cutting corners on maintenance and staff.

Deregulation unexpectedly made it more rather than less attractive to continue running nukes. In states where ratepayers are being forced to pay off nuclear construction costs, day-to-day nuclear operations are for the first time competitive with other forms of power.

In states without nuclear bailout provisions, it is also proving attractive for utilities to relicense and continue operating some nuclear plants, because this gives them 20 more years to collect money from ratepayers to pay off nuclear construction debts and build up decommissioning funds.

In either case, extended licenses encourages owners to keep plants running-or to sell them for some quick money and a chance to escape further responsibility. Companies that have recently purchased a number of U.S. and Canadian reactors and want to buy more, exhibit the lowest standards yet seen in the nuclear industry, specializing in squeezing out the most megawatts with the least possible investment.

The vast majority of people in the United States and many parts of the world oppose nuclear power. Relicensing the reactors flies in the face of democratic desires as well as common sense. In spite of the industry and the NRC's attempts to hide information, the people of the world know enough about the horrendous consequences of nuclear errors to know that we must end this ill-starred experiment as soon as possible. There are plenty of alternatives that can replace nuclear power. It is time for the U.S. government to drop its support for this obsolete and extraordinarily damaging technology, so that full-scale development of the alternatives can proceed.

We as ratepayers would much rather put our money toward safe and sustainable alternatives. Personally, I even pay a little extra to support Green Mountain Energy's "Wind for the Future" program which is building NEW wind-electric generating capacity. As citizens we have a responsibility to generations to come. The nuclear reactors we have now are time bombs, keeping them going past their design limitations is begging for disaster.

Sincerely,

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