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Add = J. Rik Hoff (JIR2)
S. Schneider (SXSH)

SUBJECT: Shut San Onofre down permanently NOW!!! Here's why (please forward widely!)

December 6th, 2004

To The Editor:

Right now, San Onofre Nuclear Waste Generating Station is in a bad way. Nearly everything in the whole facility is cracking apart. It is embrittled, frail, old. Its bones are hardened. Its arteries are clogged and stiff. It keeps popping and poofing, bursting and spilling, leaking, spraying, steaming, venting, dripping, gushing, pouring out poisons into our environment.

The tritium released from the plant alone is a major environmental concern for swimmers and surfers in the water up and down the coast from the plant. Tritium is absorbed by the body everywhere, because chemically, it is just radioactively altered water. Tritium has a half-life of about 12 years and while it does occur naturally, there is no good reason on earth to increase the dose to people.

In the course of its daily operation the plant also releases Cesium-137, Strontium-90, uranium, plutonium (both in a variety of isotopes) and over 200 other radioactive "daughter products" of the nuclear reaction. The nuclear industry and the lame-duck, industry-flunky "regulators" who watch it assert that these releases are harmless. It is foolhardy to agree with them when so many of the mechanisms for damage by radioactivity are well-known in the scientific community and undeniable to any unbiased observer.

When the nuclear industry started promoting its dogma about how clean nuclear power was, far fewer of these facts were established, such as the role of "free-radicals" in the creation of cancer. Now, these things are much better known, but the entire nuclear industry refuses to acknowledge these issues. They still try to convince people that a little of their radiation, scattered into your body randomly through pollution, might even be good for you. It isn't. One atomic decay inside your body can directly destroy 20,000 or more chemical bonds -- creating tritium inside your body, for instance, or breaking apart a delicate protein -- the structure of life. One damaged DNA strand can lead to fetal deformities or cancer.

San Onofre's "steam generators" need to all be replaced -- two per plant, two plants -- total cost: estimated conservatively by the company at about 600 million dollars -- it will probably be a lot more. And they'll have to slice into the uni-body "containment dome" to do the replacement, seriously and permanently weakening that structure. And the replacement parts, unlike the originals (which were never supposed to need to be replaced, but they aged much more rapidly than expected), won't even be made in America, subject to American inspections, or made to American standards of quality (what's left of those standards, anyway).

San Onofre's "water heaters" also all need to be replaced (about 30 per unit). Cost? Just another seven million dollars for each plant (plus another \$30 million or so for the "down time"), but there's more:

Pipes have been cracking -- probably they ALL need to be replaced, too (especially if the recent accident in Japan that killed five workers teaches us anything). That's a couple more hundred million dollars that could go to renewable energy solutions instead.

Strapping for crane lifts has gotten old and failed. This reportedly cost over 5 million dollars to fix.

The plant is a wreck waiting to happen. Radiation ages things (including humans). Salty air

destroys most metals. San Onofre is breaking down far faster than "industry standards" because many nukes in America use fresh-water lakes and rivers for coolant. Not San Onofre -- it uses sea water.

But despite San Onofre's accelerated aging, the plant's owners are usually behind the eight ball when it comes to repairing things. "Let it fail, then fix it quietly" seems to be their operating motto.

Even fork lift tines have dropped suddenly, due to aging. That should NEVER happen!

Transformers have exploded because they were old, throwing shards of glass onto the nearby railway and freeway (they are so close!). Old breakers have exploded and burned, causing hundred-million dollar outages. (But in keeping with their motto, the 130-or so similar breakers were NOT replaced.)

Workers have been exposed to radiation. Releases to the public have occurred, and there have even been threats of domestic sabotage directed against the plant -- for example, from an extremely well-armed disgruntled worker who knew the plant intimately because he had broad access privileges before being demoted and eventually fired.

It's time to SHUT SAN ONOFRE DOWN. Its power is replaceable. Our land and our lives are not.

The choice to keep San Onofre's twin reactors generating 500 pounds of extremely toxic waste every day because we are too lazy to build large-scale renewable energy systems is a deadly sin we should stop committing.

But even if we did not convert to renewable energy, consider this: It's fairly easy to prove that nuclear power does not generate ANY "net" energy whatsoever, anyway! That's reason enough right there to get rid of the plants. This assertion stems from the incredibly energy-intensive processes needed to mine and refine uranium into fuel, as well as construction costs (and reconstruction costs), and dismantling costs. But there are even more costs -- for example, the energy that will be needed to take care of the waste for the next million years, including the dismantled pieces and the "spent" fuel. Such equations also ignore any energy expended on caring for the millions of sick and dying that would result from a serious nuclear accident.

Nuclear energy is a financial rat-hole as well as a terrorist's primary target. San Onofre makes money only for its immediate owners, who are practically GIVEN uranium fuel by the U.S. Government, who also promises (but so far has failed) to take it away after it has been turned into radioactive waste (at great profit) by Southern California Edison.

San Onofre can and should be shut down NOW. While operating, it is thousands of times more vulnerable to terrorism or forces of nature than when it is shut down, even though the fuel will still be there long after the last watt of electricity is produced, and it will still be a danger. But it's much more dangerous now, and now is a perfect time to cut our losses.

Sincerely,

Russell Hoffman
Concerned Citizen
Carlsbad, CA

The author is an independent researcher on nuclear power. He has written thousands of essays

on the subject and his work has been published in several different languages and in more than a dozen countries. More than two dozen nuclear activist organizations link to his web site or have republished his essays or computer-animated tutorials about nuclear power at their sites. (Some URLs for his material are given below.) He has been quoted in the Washington Post and several dozen other media outlets. Please distribute this document to all your California friends and media. We CAN get San Onofre (and Diablo Canyon, too) SHUT DOWN TODAY!

Please visit these web sites:

SHUT SAN ONOFRE!:

<http://www.animatedsoftware.com/envirom/onofre/index.htm>

POISON FIRE USA: An animated history of major nuclear activities in the continental United States:

www.animatedsoftware.com/poifu/poifu.swf

Internet Glossary of Nuclear Terminology / "The Demon Hot Atom":

<http://www.animatedsoftware.com/hotwords/index.htm>

List of every nuclear power plant in America, with history, activist orgs, specs, etc.:

http://www.animatedsoftware.com/envirom/no_nukes/nukelist.htm

List of ~350 books and videos about nuclear issues in my collection (donations welcome!):

http://www.animatedsoftware.com/envirom/no_nukes/mybooks.htm

Learn about The Effects of Nuclear War here:

http://www.animatedsoftware.com/envirom/no_nukes/tenw/nuke_war.htm

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