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From: Walpole, Robert W. [rwalpol@entergy.com]
Sent: Friday, January 08, 2010 8:17 AM
To: Ayegbusi, Odunayo; Cataldo, Paul
Subject: FW: Nuclear steam leak intentional: Response to Indian Point plant shutdown

For your information. Wanted to make sure you guys saw this. I do not know what we are going to do, may a letter to the editor?

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Nuclear steam leak intentional: Response to Indian Point plant shutdown

BY Abby Luby
DAILY NEWS WRITER

Friday, January 8th 2010, 4:00 AM

- The recent shutdown at the Indian Point Nuclear power plant and release of contaminated steam into the atmosphere was intentional, the federal agency that oversees the nation's nuclear power plants insisted Thursday.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman Neil Sheehan said the release valves "were intentionally opened (as per plant procedures) as part of the shutdown."

The steam went undetected for two two days in November from Unit 2 at the Westchester-based nuke plant.

NRC inspectors at Indian Point later learned that an estimated 600,000 gallons of boiling, radioactive water turned to steam and was released over the lower Hudson Valley.

Sheehan explained that boiling, radioactive water did not flash into steam as it exited the valves and hit the air, but rather that the valves first reduced pressure in the form of steam created in the steam generators.

"The boiling has already occurred in the steam generators before the steam ever reaches the atmospheric steam dump valves," he said.

A Daily News investigation confirmed that the steam dump valves were intentionally opened because of a problem in the generator at Indian Point that caused the plant to shut down.

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But it also found the valve didn't close when it was supposed to and kept releasing steam into the environment.

NRC inspectors are still trying to figure out what really happened. A report on the incident is expected at the end of the month.

Because a radioactive steam cloud is difficult to see, the massive amount of steam was verified by a NRC inspector at the plant.

Sheehan stressed that the level of a radioactive isotope tritium in the steam was below the allowable federal levels for drinking water. The News, however, has reported that the release of tritium was not in drinking water but airborne in escaped steam which is inhaled through the lungs.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not have safe levels set for inhaling tritium. The NRC uses the drinking water levels whenever radiated water is dumped into the Hudson River or when it threatens to contaminate ground water.

Entergy, the owner of the Indian Point, files annual reports about radioactivity regularly released into the air and water.

But The News found the reports are published too long after the fact and mired in technological jargon, unlike timely news stories that inform the general public.

Sheehan responded that "The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission takes seriously its mission of protecting people and the environment. Part of that mission is assessing the significance of events and responding accordingly."

Read more: http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/2010/01/08/2010-01-08_nuclear_steam_leak_intentional_response_to_indian_point_plant_shutdown.html#ixzz0c1aTKJE