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Full-text Links: Clicking the hypertext links in our write-ups will take you to the newspapers' original full-text articles.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION NEWS SUMMARY

TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2011 7:00 AM EDT

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TODAY'S EDITION

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NRC NEWS:

NRC Chairman Says Fukushima Situation Is Static But Not Stable. The AP (4/12, Daly) reports, "The top US nuclear regulator said Monday he will not change

a recommendation that US citizens stay at least 50 miles away from Japan's crippled nuclear power plant, even as he declared that the crisis in that country remains 'static.'" NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko said that while the "month-old crisis had not yet stabilized," conditions at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant have not "changed significantly for several days."

Jaczko called the situation "static but not yet stable," and suggested that while not much has changed in recent days, it will many weeks or months before the plant is stabilized. The NRC Chairman called his March 16 recommendation of a 50-mile evacuation zone for US citizens in Japan, "prudent," noting projections for continued deterioration at the stricken facility.

In an abbreviated version of its report, the AP (4/12) noted that Jaczko "said he personally made the decision to recommend that 50 miles was a safe distance from the crippled reactors." Jaczko's "recommendation raised questions about US confidence in Tokyo's risk assessments."

NRC Leaked Memo Says Aftershocks Will "Continue To Be A Concern." In continuing coverage of Japan's damaged Fukushima nuclear plant, CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360" (4/12, 2:06 a.m. EDT) notes criticism of Japanese officials' response. CNN's Jim Walsh refers to an NRC memo "that was leaked. It was a memo from late March that expressed concern about aftershocks because these plants have already been stressed," in predicting that continuing seismic aftershocks "are going to continue to be a concern."

Feinstein Urges NRC To Require Faster Move To Dry Cask Storage. Reuters (4/12, Rascoe) reports Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) called on the NRC Monday to require nuclear power plants to accelerate the move of radioactive waste from pools to dry cask storage. In a letter to NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko, Feinstein wrote, "The lesson from Japan's disaster is that we must be prepared to respond to unanticipated threats," adding, "Therefore, any policy changes that further reduce risks of an unsafe situation catching the industry off-guard should be implemented." In her argument that dry cask storage was safer, Feinstein cited a 2006 study by the National Research Council that said an accident or terrorist attack involving used fuel in dry cask storage would be easier to contain and to recover from than if waste stored in pools was compromised.

E&E News PM (4/12, Northey) adds that Jaczko, when Feinstein raised this issue at a Senate hearing last month, said "that spent fuel can be stored safely in wet pools for up to 100 years and that wet storage is just as safe as dry storage systems."

Vulnerabilities Seen In Spent Fuel Pool Storage. The Tennessean (4/12, Paine, 129K) reports, "Tons of radioactive waste are piling up at the Tennessee Valley Authority's nuclear power plants and others around the country in water-filled pools that in many cases were not intended to hold so much." At TVA's Browns Ferry plant, some spent fuel has sat in the cooling pool for decades, and while TVA insists such pools are safe, traces of "radioactive

iodine linked to the damaged Fukushima plant were detected in the air and rainwater last week in Tennessee and other states," while the spent fuel "stored in dry casks at the Japanese nuclear plant remained secure." According to the NRC, 75 percent of spent fuel is stored in cooling pools designed to serve as a "temporary rest stop" to partially cool spent fuel before transport to a permanent repository.

Whitman Says US Reactors Are "Enormously Safe." Appearing on CNN Newsroom (4/11, 12:13pm EDT), former EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman spoke on nuclear safety in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi plant crisis. She was asked whether US plants are safe from earthquake, tsunami and strategic attack. Todd Whitman said; "Well, I mean you can never say you're prepared for everything. Obviously you just can't predicate and predict everything that might happen. But certainly ours are enormously safe."

NRC Investigating Workers Exposed To Radiation At Cooper Station. In its "On Deadline" blog, USA Today (4/12, Eversley, 1.83M) reports that according to MSNBC, "Three workers have been exposed to radiation" at the Cooper Nuclear Station, near Brownsville, Nebraska. Monday the NRC announced "it was looking into the 'unplanned radiation exposures' on April 3" at Cooper Station, which "took place during a maintenance procedure during which the workers removed a tube contaminated with radioactive material through the bottom of the reactor vessel as opposed to through the top, which would normally be the procedure." When radiation alarms were triggered, the "workers set the tube down and immediately left the area, according to the NRC."

Bloomberg News (4/12, Lomax) reports, "The Nebraska Public Power District, which operates the Cooper Nuclear Station, doesn't believe the workers received higher doses than allowed under NRC regulations in the April 3 incident," but NRC Regional Administrator, Elmo Collins said the agency wants "to understand why normal work practices were not followed." NPPD spokesman Mark Becker said the company would "cooperate fully with the investigation."

According to CNN (4/12) NRC inspectors "began their work Monday," and "will 'look at the circumstances and decision-making by NPPD officials that led to the exposures, review the licensee's response to the event, calculate the exposures the workers received and review corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence,' the commission statement said."

MSNBC (4/12, Dedman) notes that the "Cooper plant has a single boiling-water reactor of General Electric design."

The Wall Street Journal (4/12, Tracy, Subscription Publication, 2.02M) notes NPPD's Becker added, "We're not

happy with what transpired and we're doing a complete root-cause investigation." Reuters (4/12, Rampton, McCune) also reported on the incident and investigation.

KMTV-TV Omaha, NE (4/11, 10:17 p.m. CDT) reports that three workers in Nebraska "were exposed to higher than expected levels of radiation. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission says the incident happened a week ago Sunday at the Cooper nuclear station near Brownville. Regulators say the workers removed a contaminated tube from the bottom of a reactor vessel, instead of the top. A spokesman says the level of radiation did not exceed safety limits." KLKN-TV Lincoln, NE (4/11, Nicole, 10:05 p.m. CDT) also includes a phone interview with a Nebraska Public Power Distribution spokesman, and KETV-TV Omaha, NE (4/11, 6:06 p.m. CDT) notes that the Cooper plant is temporarily closed for maintenance, while the Fort Calhoun nuclear plant is closed for refueling.

NRC Approves Power Uprate At Limerick Station. The Philadelphia Inquirer (4/11, Maykuth, 357K) reports, "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Monday announced it has approved a 1.65 percent-power increase by the two units of the Limerick Generating Station in Montgomery County." Exelon had requested the increase so "it could more accurately measure feedwater flow into the reactors. The 'uprate' will allow the two boiling water reactors to increase output from 1,189 to 1,205 megawatts of electricity."

The Lansdale (PA) Reporter (4/11, 10K) adds that the "NRC staff's careful evaluation determined that Exelon could safely increase the reactors' power output primarily through more accurate means of measuring feedwater flow. As part of its evaluation, NRC staff reviewed the company's analysis showing the plant's design can accommodate the increased power level." The "NRC's safety evaluation of the plant's proposed power uprate focused on several areas, including the nuclear steam supply systems, instrumentation and control systems, electrical systems, accident evaluations, radiological consequences, fire protection, operations and training, testing, and technical specification changes." Power-Gen Worldwide (4/12) also covers the uprate.

House Panel To Probe US Readiness For A Tsunami. E&E Daily (4/12, Yehle) reports, "The House Oversight and Government Reform subcommittee on national security plans to meet Thursday to discuss whether the federal government is prepared to 'warn, respond and assist' state and local governments in the event of a tsunami, according to a committee staffer." The "Japanese earthquake – and resulting tsunami – has incited concerns over the United States' warning system in recent weeks. Such a disaster would necessitate the cooperation of several

agencies, including NOAA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local law enforcement agencies."

Analyst: Investors Should Not Treat Nuclear-Related Stocks As Radioactive. In an investment analysis on CNBC's (4/12) "Fast Money: Behind the Money" page, Executive Producer, John Melloy writes, "Nuclear power-related shares are taking a hit, Germany may abolish nuclear power altogether in 12 years and iodine tablets are selling fast on the US West Coast as radiation fears reach new heights." The "global overreaction" from the "rare 9.0 magnitude earthquake and massive tsunami" may "set back the safest and easiest way for this country to solve its energy crisis, investors said." Melloy points to John Downs of Euro Pacific Capital, who said investors "should not treat nuclear-related stocks as if they were radioactive," because eventually, "reason prevails," and "nuclear power is hands down the best option available for powering the 21st century."

Senate Panel To Examine Safety Of US Nuclear Industry. E&E Daily (4/11, Northey) reported, "Senators this week will delve into the implications of Japan's nuclear crisis for the safety and future" US nuclear plants as the "full Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the committee's subpanel on clean air and nuclear safety [hears] from a host of top energy regulators tomorrow about the role nuclear energy will play in the country's energy portfolio going forward." NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson will provide opening statements before the committee hears "from a host of state regulators and lawmakers, especially from California, as well as Exelon Generation Chief Operating Officer Charles Pardee."

Senate Committee To Vote On Lyons Nomination To DOE Position April 12. On its website, AllGov (4/11, Wallechinsky, Brinkerhoff) profiles Peter B. Lyons, "physicist and longtime member of the nation's premier research laboratory," who was "nominated to be the Department of Energy's assistant secretary for nuclear energy" in December 2010. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is to vote on his nomination April 12. AllGov notes that the "mission of the Office of Nuclear Energy is to promote nuclear power as an energy source" with an "annual budget of more than \$850 million."

PG&E Asks NRC To Table Diablo Canyon Relicensing Review Pending Seismic Study. The AP (4/12, Blood) reports, "The owner of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power complex asked federal regulators to delay issuing extended operating permits until comprehensive studies are completed on earthquake faults in the area,

officials said Monday." Pacific Gas and Electric Company's move came "after a public outcry over possible safety risks at the California plant, which were heightened by the huge earthquake and tsunami that plunged Japan into a nuclear crisis." Last month at a legislative meeting, PG&E officials said Diablo Canyon was safe and "gave no hint" that it would "agree to complete three-dimensional seismic studies before a renewal of the licenses." But, Monday, PG&E Senior Vice President John Conway issued a statement saying the company would be "responsive" to concerns many in the public have that the research to be completed prior to relicensing. The AP (4/12) also published an abbreviated version of its report.

The Los Angeles Times (4/12, Sarno, 657K) adds that the utility's decision came in light of "recent events at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, and the considerable public concern regarding the need to assure the seismic safety at DCCP." The Times adds that Republican state Sen. Sam Blakeslee commended PG&E for "taking the responsible action of delaying relicensing" and added, "We respect that this is a difficult decision that demonstrates their willingness to prioritize the safety of Californians."

The San Luis Obispo (CA) Tribune (4/12, Sneed) reports, PG&E sent a letter to the NRC "asking it to delay final implementation of license renewal at Diablo Canyon" until the advanced seismic studies can be completed, an effort that "could delay license renewal through 2015."

The San Francisco Chronicle (4/12, Baker, 232K) reports, "Little is known about the fault, first identified in 2008" and since the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, "a growing number of California officials have demanded that PG&E conduct further studies on the Shoreline Fault before pressing ahead with license renewal. Diablo Canyon sits on a seismically active stretch of the Central California coast near San Luis Obispo."

The Santa Maria (CA) Times (4/12, Charlton, 16K) reports that the announcement came "less than 24 hours before the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors was expected to hold a public hearing on the issue." Board Chairman Adam Hill said the board was still likely to meet and will probably still send a letter to PG&E. Hill "said he believes that PG&E should completely pull back from the relicensing process and focus all of its efforts on the safety of Diablo Canyon. 'I think it's a step in the right direction,'" he said, but said "they could do more."

The Wall Street Journal (4/12, Casselman, Power, Subscription Publication, 2.02M) adds that PG&E spokesman Paul Flake insisted the company had heard the concerns of the public, while Reuters (4/12, O'Grady) notes that an NRC official said the agency is reviewing PG&E's letter. More specifically, Bloomberg News (4/12, Chediak) says the NRC "is considering the potential impact PG&E's request might

have on the timing of the license renewal, Eliot Brenner, a spokesman for the commission, said in an e-mail statement."

US Rep. Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara, welcomed the delay, according to the Pacific Coast Business Times (4/12, 3K), "but said a voluntary pause in the licensing proceedings wasn't enough. She said she was seeking a suspension of the relicensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission until a full range of earthquake risks are assessed. ... Republican State Sen. Sam Blakeslee and Capps have been vocal in calling for PG&E to complete extensive studies of seismic risk prior to any relicensing by the NRC."

Also covering the announcement were, among other sources, Santa Maria (CA) Times (4/11, 16K), Power-Gen Worldwide (4/12) and

KCOY-TV Santa Barbara, CA (4/11, Sanchez, 11:01 p.m. EDT) reports that PG&E "is asking the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to delay its license renewal application for the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant." The plant operator "wants to submit 3-D seismic studies before the licensing process is completed."

KSBY-TV (4/11, 11:02 p.m. PDT) reports the story. It shows a PG&E spokesman saying that the company has "heard our customers' concerns and the concerns of our government partners" on the need for seismic research before action on the license renewal. But an opponent says that, "Three years after the state asked them to do these studies, and a month after a tragedy in Japan made the need terribly obvious, PG&E has finally agreed do a small part of what's been required of them by the state." KSBY-TV San Luis Obispo, California (4/11) also ran the story on its website.

KBFXCD Santa Barbara, CA (4/11, 10:16 p.m. PDT) also reports the story.

Coastal Commission Report Says Most California Faults Could Not Produce 9.0 Magnitude Quake. The Capitol Weekly (4/12, Howard) reports, "Despite 1,100 miles of coastline and a history of powerful earthquakes, most of California is not susceptible to the kind of temblor and tsunami that devastated Japan, according to a report by the California Coastal Commission." However, the Cascadia Subduction Zone is a "jumble" of tectonic plates that "meet deep below the earth's continental crust," and "could produce a quake – and tsunami – on the scale of Japan's Tohoku Quake." But, according to a 21-page study by staff geologist Mark Johnsson, "the majority of faults in California, including the San Andreas fault, could not produce a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and that most of the state 'is not susceptible to an event on the scale' of the quake that struck Japan.

Officials To Conduct Drill Of San Onofre Station's Emergency Response. On its website, KGTV-TV San Diego, CA (4/11) reported, "Southern

California radiation experts and emergency workers will take part in a drill on Tuesday to test responses to an emergency at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, an exercise that is done every other year but has taken on added significance because of the disaster in Japan." Edison spokesman Gil Alexander said, "drills are conducted at the San Onofre plant a few times a year, but this biennial one is a much more extensive test that is monitored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency." The "main difference this year is the interest from the media, according Tina Walker, a spokesman for the California Emergency Management Agency."

The Los Angeles Daily News (4/12, 91K) reports, "Radiation experts and emergency workers from Los Angeles to the Mexican border will pretend that a major radioactive gas leak has occurred at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station starting Tuesday." The "California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors starting Tuesday, and concluding Thursday." SCE spokesman Gil Alexander said there "are a total of about 200 of us associated with the plant that will drill." Half of those "will drill on plant procedures, and the other half will work on a pretend radiation leak with government officials, the news media and the general public."

On its website, KCBS-TV (4/11) noted that the "secret drill exercise" will "simulate a radioactive leak that goes beyond the plant's boundaries and into the community. Workers will test emergency shut-down procedures and practice securing radioactive fuel rods." The San Juan Capistrano Patch (4/11) also covers the exercise, as does the Encinitas Patch (4/11, Reed) and XETV-TV San Diego (4/10).

NRC To Discuss San Onofre Station Performance At April 28 Meeting. The San Clemente (CA) Times (4/12, 20K) runs an NRC news release in its entirety on the upcoming San Juan Capistrano meeting April 28 with Southern California Edison Co. "to discuss the agency's 2010 assessment of safety performance at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station."

Massachusetts' Court Rules State May Regulate Pilgrim's Water Intake. The AP (4/12) reports Massachusetts' Supreme Judicial Court has ruled that the state's environmental officials "have the power to regulate a water intake system used by the Pilgrim nuclear power plant in Plymouth," reversing a lower court ruling that the state Department of Environment lacked such authority. "Pilgrim employs a cooling system that pulls in water from Cape Cod Bay and later discharges heated water through outflow pipes. While the discharges are regulated by the state and federal governments, Entergy Corp., which owns Pilgrim, challenged whether the state also has the power to regulate the intake process."

The Boston Globe (4/12, Daley, 244K) explains that "environmental studies show the heated water can harm aquatic life. The state and environmentalists have also long argued that the sucking in of water can kill vast amounts of fish larvae, eggs, shellfish, and other aquatic organisms – larger creatures become trapped on screens covering the intake pipes, and smaller ones are sucked into the cooling system." Kenneth L. Kimmell, commissioner of the state DEP, said in response to the ruling, "This is great news for the Massachusetts environment," adding, "It clearly gives us the ability to protect our aquatic resources from the potential harms (of intake)."

The Boston Herald (4/12, 117K) adds that "officials for Entergy declined immediate comment on the ruling," saying that they "have received the decision and our attorneys are studying it." The Brockton, Massachusetts' Enterprise News (4/12) and Water World (4/12), a water and wastewater industry website, also cover this story.

Safety, Tax Bill Discussed At Millstone Public Meeting.

The Norwich Bulletin (4/12, Mosher) reports, "Millstone Nuclear Power Station executives publicly reiterated their case against two tax bills being considered by the General Assembly." Around "100 people attended a meeting at Waterford Town Hall Monday night which featured presentations by executives of Dominion Resources Inc." According to Dominion's Daniel Weekley "a \$335 million tax on the plant's electricity output contained in Senate Bill 1176 would be a first nationally." He said, "Once this production tax starts it will never stop. ... It will hit every one of us."

Also at the meeting, the Greenwich Time (4/12, Cummings, 3.31M) reports, "the operators of the Millstone Nuclear Power Station on Monday attempted to assure nervous residents that the disaster now unfolding at a nuclear facility in Japan cannot happen here." Millstone's Skip Jordan told the audience, "Every meeting at Millstone station starts with a message about safety. Our number one priority is to protect the health and safety of the public."

The New London Day (4/12) adds, "Millstone's two operating reactors, which are pressurized water reactors, are safer, Jordan said, because they have primary and secondary cooling systems to keep the plants cool." Mystic resident Nancy Burton "wanted to know why Dominion isn't moving the spent fuel from Unit 1 immediately into an alternate type of storage known as dry cask storage." According to Jordan "the company is evaluating moving that fuel so that it is no longer housed above the reactor, where it is more vulnerable, but he and Weekley noted that if the tax is approved it will make it more difficult to invest in safety improvements like that." A separate New London Day (4/12, Daddona) article also reports on the meeting.

NRC Says UniStar Not Eligible To Build A New Calvert Cliffs Reactor. The Calvert Recorder (4/12, Russell) reports the NRC "released a report on Friday stating it could not issue UniStar Nuclear Energy a license for the proposed third reactor in Calvert County on the basis of foreign ownership." The company "submitted a combined license application and 'negation action plan' in January in an attempt to address the issue, citing U.S. individuals who would oversee the operations of Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant's third unit, since French company Electricite de France acquired Constellation Energy's 50 percent interest in UniStar, their joint U.S. nuclear venture." But the NRC ruled "that UniStar's plan is unsuitable for obtaining a license for CC3, on the grounds that: '1) UniStar is 100 percent owned by a foreign corporation (EDF), which is 85 percent owned by the French government; 2) EDF has the power to exercise foreign ownership, control, or domination over UniStar; and 3) the Negation Action Plan submitted by UniStar does not negate the foreign ownership, control or domination issues discussed above,' the report states."

The website World Nuclear News (4/11) and Nuclear Street (4/11) are also covering this story.

FEMA To Oversee Emergency Response Exercises At Three Mile Island. On its website, WHTM-TV Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (4/11) adds that the "week-long exercises are required by the federal government every two years. FEMA specifically will evaluate the response of state and local emergency agencies within the 10-mile emergency-planning zone of the nuclear plant." Preliminary findings of the "exercise will be presented during a public meeting Friday at 11:00 a.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn, at 3943 TecPort Drive, in Harrisburg."

On its website, WTAJ-TV Altoona, Pennsylvania (4/11) reports, "Emergency crews at and around Three Mile Island will be evaluated starting Monday. FEMA will be looking at how prepared state and local responders are to protect public health and safety. Preliminary findings of the emergency preparedness drills will be revealed on Friday." WFMZ-TV Allentown, Pennsylvania (4/11) also reported on its website.

Athens Seeks Grant To Improve Browns Ferry Evacuation Route. The Decatur (AL) Daily (4/12, Hollman) reports, "A multi-million project at Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant could help the city and county get a grant to improve one of the plant's evacuation routes." According to the article, "On Monday, the Athens City Council approved spending up to \$250,000 from its general reserve fund toward the project, contingent on it receiving a \$2 million grant." James Rich, the Public Works Director, indicated that the grant is "through the Alabama Industrial Access Road and

Bridge Corp." The city plans to make its request for the grant at the corporation's meeting in June.

AARP Faults New Reactor Plan For Iowa. According to the Cedar Rapids (IA) Gazette (4/12, Lynch, 51K), "AARP is firing back in a war of words over legislation it says would stick Iowans with the cost of developing future nuclear power generation even if the plants are never built." The group said at a Statehouse press conference Monday, that "it doesn't oppose the development of new power generation, including MidAmerican Energy's proposed nuclear plant, but objects to a pair of bills that would change the rules at the expense of Iowans, including its 370,000 50-and-older Iowa members." Bruce Koepfel, AARP state director, said that instead of relying on "shareholders and investors" to finance a new reactor, "the proposed legislation 'shifts the billion-dollar plus costs to ratepayers for a possible nuclear plant, years before the plant is built, or the plant design has even been approved.'"

The AP (4/12) notes that AARP "ads claim residents and businesses would pay more if the Legislature approves a bill backed by MidAmerican Energy that would let the utility charge customers in advance for the construction of a nuclear power plant. Democratic Sen. Swati Dandekar of Marion and others have called the ad misleading."

Radio Iowa (4/12) added Bruce Koepfel said the "proposal allows utility companies to force customers to continue paying accumulated costs to the utility even if the plant is cancelled."

The Des Moines Register (4/11, Petroski, 111K) also reports the story.

Shumlin Wants Lawmakers To Pass Tax On Vermont Yankee's Spent Fuel. The AP (4/12, Gram) reports, "Vermont Gov. Pete Shumlin on Monday unveiled his plan to pay for promoting renewable energy development without relying on a surcharge to customers." Shumlin said Monday "he still hoped to get money for the fund from Vermont Yankee's owner," Entergy and urged "lawmakers to pass a new tax on spent nuclear fuel being stored in the state. Vermont Yankee's spent fuel storage pool is nearly full and the plant has begun storing some of its spent fuel in concrete cask outside its reactor building in Vernon. Like other nuclear plants around the country, Vermont Yankee has been hard-pressed to find a place to send its highly radioactive waste."

On its website, WCAX-TV Burlington, Vermont (4/11, Thurston) reported, "Vermont now has a little more than \$8.5 million in its Clean Energy Development Fund," but "since the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant pays into the program, and since Yankee is scheduled to close next year, the Shumlin administration had to come up with a way to keep the

development money flowing." Shumlin says "switching the way the state handles its Clean Energy Development Fund will ensure money's in the pot to entice other projects to break ground."

Peace Walk Protestors Marching From Indian Point To Vermont Yankee. Mid-Hudson (NY) News (4/12) reports, "Some two dozen people started their Peace Walk in Croton Sunday, stopped to pray outside the Indian Point nuclear power plant in Buchanan, before they set out for the 206-mile walk to the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant." Leading the walk, Japanese Buddhist nun Jun Yasuda of the Grafton Peace Pagoda, said, "People have been suffering from the earthquake; so many people died by the earthquake and also so many people are suffering under the nuclear situations."

Riverkeeper Says Tsunami Not Necessary To Damage Indian Point. Westchester (NY) Journal News (4/12, Fitz-Gibbon) reports that Riverkeeper representative Paul Gallay also told the Westchester County board committee that it "wouldn't take a tsunami to dangerously damage the Indian Point nuclear reactors." Gallay also "told a county board committee that radioactive spent fuel pools at the Buchanan reactors are Indian Point's 'Achilles' heel." Gallay said, "All of these issues do not require a tsunami, which is one of the things that Indian Point says, and says that we should be easy in our minds because we won't have a tsunami." He suggested corroded piping, metal fatigue in the containment dome and embrittlement of the containment dome, could cause problems.

Entergy, Riverkeeper Invited To Brief County Board On Indian Point Safety. The Westchester (NY) Journal News (4/11, Fitz-Gibbon) reported, "The Westchester County Board of Legislators will hold its latest in a series of public meetings on the Indian Point nuclear power plants today at 3 p.m., seeking to shed light on safety issues at the Buchanan plant in the wake of the crisis facing Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant." The "county board's committees on environment and energy, and public safety and security, which have hosted the meetings, said they have invited officials from the environmental group Riverkeeper as well as officials from Entergy Northeast, which owns the Indian Point reactors."

Plant Farley Unit 2 Reactor Reduces Output.

According to a Bloomberg News (4/12, McClelland) reactor output status story, "Southern Co. (SO) slowed the 860-megawatt Farley 2 reactor in Alabama to 56 percent of capacity from 100 percent on April 8." Another unit at the site 18 miles east of Dothan, "the 851-megawatt Farley 1, is operating at full power."

Decision On Plant Vogtle Overruns Awaited.

ABC affiliate WSB-TV Atlanta (4/11, 4:57 am EDT) reported that this week "we may find out whether taxpayers or Georgia Power would pay if costs run over on a proposed expansion at Plant Vogtle. A state committee could resolve on Thursday and could resolve the two-year-old dispute. The utility said it should not lose profits if the project exceeds its \$6.4 billion budget."

Shimkus Plans To Proceed With Yucca Trip Despite Waxman's Criticisms.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch (4/12, Lambrecht, 232K) reports Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL) said in response to concerns raised by Rep. Harry Waxman (D-CA) that a trip to Yucca Mountain and its \$200,000 price tag was wasteful that "he is undeterred -- and 'appalled' at the suggestion that the delegation would be wasting money." Shimkus said, "We spent \$14 billion or \$15 billion to prepare this site for long-term storage. What are they trying to hide?" He went on to say that the DOE "is distorting the cost" of the trip, explaining that "the delegation is willing to ride a bus to the site and doesn't need helicopters, he said. Nor is it a must that they see inside the mountain, meaning that expensive safety tests and other preparation is unnecessary."

The Las Vegas Review-Journal (4/12, Tetreault, 178K) adds that Shimkus spokesman Steven Tomaszewski said the cost-cutting measures were decided upon before Waxman voiced his concerns. Said Tomaszewski, "Prior to Mr. Waxman's letter on Friday, the decision was made to use buses and not require the opening of the underground portion." Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) also expressed concerns about the cost of the trip, saying that "taxpayers are getting ripped off." He added, "What in the world could be accomplished by that?...The only thing that might be a good idea would be if they all traveled to Las Vegas and stayed in our hotels."

Shimkus Explains Support For Yucca Project. In an op-ed for The Hill (4/12, 21K), Shimkus discusses his support for the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository project, writing, "While I agree with the government following its own law and taking control of nuclear waste, I question why we should throw away the \$14.5 billion already spent on Yucca Mountain. We don't need regional sites; we already have designated a consolidated government storage site!" And because he believes "the administration is failing to carry out the current federal law," referring to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, he adds that he has joined with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI) to investigate why the Administration has chosen to abandon the plans for the project.

Reid Confident Yucca Is Dead After Rider Fails. Under the headline, "Despite House GOP Push, Harry Reid Declares 'Yucca Is Dead,'" the Las Vegas Sun (4/12, Demirjian, 41K) reports that "Yucca Mountain, which hasn't received funding under any federal budget that's been passed since Obama came to office, came back on the agenda this past winter, when Republican House leaders included funding and a directive about the projected nuclear waste storage site in their budget bill, H.R. 1." But it was "one rider that fell off the table quietly that will likely resonate strongest for Nevada." When asked Monday whether "he was at all concerned that it might still be funded," Reid responded, "H.R. 1's history, man." Platts (4/12, Hiruo) also reports this story.

Analyst Questions Safety Of Spent Fuel Storage. The AP (4/11) reported that the TVA "stores spent fuel and fuel rods at its plants, just like other nuclear plant operators, but an industry analyst is questioning the safety of that storage." The utility has over "2,544 metric tons of radioactive spent fuel in cooling ponds at its Sequoyah and Watts Bar nuclear plants in Tennessee and Browns Ferry plant in Athens." The Union of Concerned Scientists' Edwin Lyman "said the amount of fuel from TVA's reactors represents about '100 reactor-years worth of discharges.'"

Murkowski Talks Up Small Modular Reactors. Politico (4/12, Goode, 25K) reports Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's ranking Republican, "thinks Congress will have more success taking a 'graduated' approach to energy legislation while keeping up the pressure to respond to last year's Gulf of Mexico spill." She "cited legislation increasing hydropower and addressing small-modular nuclear reactors as examples," saying that "there is 'probably much greater likelihood' of something like the latter bill moving 'than a full-on expanded nuclear piece, particularly in view of just the uncertainty that we're seeing after the earthquake in Japan.'"

Higher MOX Fuel Concentration Weighed for US Reactors. The Global Security Newswire (4/11), citing a New York Times article on Sunday, reported that "the federal Tennessee Valley Authority and Energy Department have conducted talks on potentially substituting mixed-oxide fuel derived from nuclear-weapon material for one-third of the low-enriched uranium in several US power reactors, a substantially higher proportion of MOX fuel than a crippled Japanese nuclear plant had used." However, "any TVA move on the proposal has been put off pending a review of the behavior of MOX fuel at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant," the article said. "We are studying the ongoing events in Japan very closely," TVA spokesman Ray Golden

said. The National Review (4/11, Pollowitz, 193K) "Planet Gore – The hot blog" also cited the New York Times report.

Shaw Group, Babcock & Wilcox Aim To Help Dismantle Japanese Reactors. The Charlotte (NC) Business Journal (4/11, Downey, 14K), citing the New York Times, reported that "Babcock & Wilcox and the Shaw Power Group are working with Toshiba and Westinghouse on plans to dismantle the badly damaged nuclear reactors in northern Japan." The Journal said "Toshiba, the lead company involved in the work, has assembled a team of experts from the other companies to help with the plans."

Shaw Group Profit Declines, Shares Fall. The CNBC's Squawk on the Street (4/11) reported that "shares of Shaw Group have fallen after missing earnings expectations" and that "the company was banking on an expanding nuclear industry for growth." D. A. Davidson analyst John Rogers, who downgraded the engineering and construction firm, said on TV that Shaw hasn't "talked about loss of orders, but I think more they're talking about the strength of the new designs for nuclear power plants and the ability to continue to operate even if they" lose "backup power." Rogers said: "I think at this point they have not seen a significant change in the outlook for their market, but I think investors are concerned the whole process of new nuclear power plants in the US may be delayed."

The AP (4/12) reports, "Shaw Group Inc., an engineering and construction company whose projects include nuclear power, said on Monday that its second-quarter profit tumbled sharply mainly due to charges to cover big swings in the value of the dollar versus the yen." The company disclosed "a profit of \$1.2 million, or a penny a share, for the quarter that ended Feb. 28, compared with net income of \$61.5 million, or 72 cents per share, for the same period last year," AP adds.

South Carolina House Speaker Briefed On SRNL, SRS' H Canyon. The Augusta (GA) Chronicle (4/12) reports, "South Carolina House Speaker Bobby Harrel met with Savannah River Site managers and officials and members of the Aiken County legislative delegation Monday for a briefing on the Savannah River National Laboratory and the uncertain future of the site's plutonium-processing H Canyon." Cliff Webb, the vice president of public affairs for Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, said, "The purpose of the meeting wasn't to create or ask for next steps but to inform." The article explains that "last month, the nine members of the Aiken County legislative delegation wrote to US Energy Secretary Steven Chu to lay out concerns about the effects of shifting funding away from H Canyon, as is proposed in the federal budget." A spokesman for the speaker said that he also planned to send a letter to Chu.

Former Joint Chiefs Chairman Says US Unprepared For Cyberattack.

Marine Gen. Peter Pace, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a cybersecurity conference in Colorado yesterday that the US is "hugely vulnerable" to cyberattacks and is "way late" in responding to the new threat, the AP (4/11) reported. Pace said the federal government should impose security regulations on private sector networks, including the banking and finance industries. Pace said a set of uniform regulations would prevent some firms from skirting the requirements in order to gain an advantage over their competitors. He "also said it would encourage innovation by creating demand for security measures."

Alexander, Lawmakers Stress Importance Of Cybersecurity. The Providence Journal (4/12, McKinney, 106K) reports NSA Director Gen. Keith Alexander "headlined a cyber-security conference at the University of Rhode Island on Monday that highlighted student and faculty research into such challenges as defending the power grid from cyber-attackers." Alexander told attendees that cybersecurity "is one of the most important issues facing our nation today." Also addressing the forum, Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse "said more legislation on cyber-security issues is expected," while Rep. James Langevin said that the nation "still stands largely unprepared to deal with various potential cyber-security threats."

Also reporting on yesterday's conference, NextGov (4/12, Sternstein) says Alexander "reaffirmed" that the US Cyber Command, which he commands, "cannot monitor civilian networks, noting its powerlessness over systems outside the .mil domain might require congressional action." Said the general, "I do not have the authority to look at what's going on in other government sectors, nor what would happen to critical infrastructures. That means that I can't stop [an assault on nonmilitary networks]." He noted that the Pentagon and DHS "are sharing information, security equipment and staff at an NSA office, under the guidance of legal counsel and privacy officers."

IN THE BLOGS:

Blog: Alternatives To Containing Nuclear Disaster Discussed. On a blog entry for Energy Collective (4/11) Charles Barton wrote that "avoiding and mitigating nuclear accidents is not terribly expensive, nor does it make nuclear power impractical, but does require the nuclear industry to change the way it does business." The article said in case of a nuclear accident, "a better safety approach" is "to capture some nuclear materials and remove them to safe places outside the core, rather than preventing their escape." The writer noted, "The GE/Hitachi ESBWR

offers significant advances in passive safety." For instance, "coolant flow no longer relies on pumps. Rather the boiling water reactor design allows for the natural circulation of coolant water through the core."

INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR NEWS:

Japan Puts Nuclear Crisis On Par With Chernobyl Disaster.

The AP (4/12) reports, "Japan's nuclear safety agency has raised the severity rating of the crisis at its nuclear plant to the highest level, on par with the 1986 Chernobyl disaster." The Washington Post (4/12, Harlan, 572K) notes that the reassessment came from "officials with Japan's Nuclear Safety Commission," which reclassified the crisis from "an 'accident with off-site risk,' to... a 'major accident.'"

The Wall Street Journal (4/12, A1, Dvorak, Osawa, Hayashi, Subscription Publication) reports despite the decision to raise the level, Japanese officials stressed that the crisis was not comparable to the Chernobyl disaster.

According to the New York Times (4/12, Tabuchi, Bradsher, Subscription Publication), Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said the elevated rating "resulted from new estimates that suggest that 'tens of thousands of terabecquerels' of radioactive material per hour were released from the plant in the aftermath" of last month's earthquake and tsunami. Still, the "total amount of radioactive material released so far is equal to about 10 percent of that released in the Chernobyl accident," the agency said.

Also yesterday, the CBS Evening News (4/11, story 10, 2:25, Couric, 6.1M) reported, "the evacuation zone around that crippled nuclear plant was expanded to include four towns some 30 miles away."

Another "Strong Earthquake" Hits Japan. The AP (4/12) reports, "A strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.3 has jolted in Tokyo and its environs. ... The epicenter of the quake was located just off the coast of Chiba, east of Tokyo." There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

The New York Times (4/12, Tabuchi, Bradsher, Subscription Publication), meanwhile, reports that the "strong aftershock...briefly set off a tsunami warning and knocked out cooling at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant for almost an hour, underscoring the vulnerability of the plant's reactors to continuing seismic activity along the coast a month after the devastating March 11 earthquake and tsunami."

ABC World News (4/11, story 4, 2:20, Stephanopoulos, 8.2M) reported, "A six minute aftershock struck the country not long after the Japanese observed a moment of silence for

the victims. Even rescuers searching for the more than 28,000 dead and missing paused to remember." ABC (Woodruff) added, "Fourteen thousand US troops" are still in Japan "to help speed up the recovery...clearing mud and debris from schools." Army Gen. Michael Harrison cautioned, "This is not going to be complete in another week or another month. The devastation in this area, it will take years to get it totally cleaned out."

NBC Nightly News (4/11, story 6, 2:45, Williams, 8.37M) reported, "The official death toll stands at more than 13,000," and "nearly 150,000 people are still without homes, living in evacuation centers."

Clinton To Visit Japan In Show Of Support. AFP (4/12) reports Secretary Clinton will visit Japan "in a show of support for the US ally as it recovers from a devastating earthquake, the State Department announced Monday." The Secretary, said spokesman Mark Toner, "will travel to Tokyo on Sunday, after stops in South Korea and in Germany where she is attending a NATO conference." Also reporting the Secretary's trip are the AP (4/12) and Reuters (4/12, Mohammed), which it calls a symbol of US support.

Daunting Challenges Await Cleanup Of Fukushima Plant Disaster. On its website, NPR (4/12) reports, "Nuclear engineers in Japan are dealing with two problems at the same time: They are working to fully stabilize the reactors at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, and they are trying to control the release of radioactive material." Containment and cleanup of the "radioactive material could take at least 10 years, at a cost of more than \$10 billion." According to nuclear engineer Lake Barrett, who coordinated cleanup at Three Mile Island for the NRC, the cleanup challenge can be broken down to energy, air, water and solids. NPR concludes that while engineers can "break the problem down to the basics, and they know how to do each individual step" nobody's "ever tried a nuclear cleanup on this scale before."

Japan-Based Nuclear Hardware Companies Face Challenging Times. The Wall Street Journal (4/12, 2.02M) reports that Japan's nuclear reactor industry faces challenging times because the country's reputation for quality products has taken a beating in view of the ongoing nuclear problems at the Fukushima Daiichi plant. The journal, citing several examples, says foreign interest in buying nuclear industry hardware from Japan has decreased significantly following the atomic plant disaster.

Siemens, Areva Terminate Nuclear Joint Venture. Reuters (4/11) reported that German industrial giant Siemens and French group Areva have terminated their nuclear joint venture. Siemens sold its 34 percent stake in Areva NP to Areva for 1.62 billion euros (\$2.34 billion). Reuters said the legal battle whether Siemens has broken its contract with Areva will, however, continue.

Anti-Nuclear Activists Barricade Road Outside London Offices Of EDF. Bloomberg News (4/11, Spillane) reported, "Activists barricaded a road outside the London offices of Electricite de France SA today to protest plans by Europe's biggest power producer to build a new generation of UK nuclear power plants." Bella Benson, a spokeswoman for Boycott EDF group said: "EDF has spent a massive amount of money marketing as an environment-friendly company." She added, "But the truth is that it's planning to lumber us with an outdated form of energy that is incredibly dangerous, extremely expensive and completely unnecessary."

Iran Touts Gains In Nuclear Program, Announces Plans To Build More Reactors. The Washington Post (4/12, Warrick, 572K) reports Iran is "proclaiming significant gains in its nuclear program, progress that Western officials and experts say could effectively erase setbacks from recent cyber attacks and shorten the timeline for acquiring nuclear weapons." In announcements "over the past three days," Iranian scientists "said they have successfully tested advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium and are less than a month away from starting the country's first commercial nuclear reactor." The announcements, says the Post, "underscore recent assessments by intelligence officials and Western nuclear experts suggesting that Iran is preparing to speed up its production of enriched uranium."

The AP (4/12) reports nuclear chief Fereidoun Abbasi announced Monday that Iran "will need more enriched uranium to fuel the 'four or five' new research reactors it is planning on building." Abbasi said Iran is planning to build the new research reactors "in the next few years" to produce medical radioisotopes.

Germany Rejects Requests To Shutter Iranian Bank. The Wall Street Journal (4/12, A6, Crawford, Subscription Publication, 2.02M) reports that despite international pressure, Germany is resisting calls to shutter the European-Iranian Trade Bank AG, arguing the bank is not engaged in illicit activities. The US, however, maintains that the sanctioned bank is a financial conduit for Iranian firms involved in weapons proliferation.

Iranian Lawmaker Blames Western "Enemies" For Pipeline Explosion. The New York Times (4/12, Yong, Subscription Publication, 950K) reports, "A member of the Iranian parliament has blamed Western 'enemies' for a blast on Friday that hit a major gas pipeline" near the city of Qom. The head of the parliament's national security committee, Parviz Sorouri, "told reporters on Sunday that Western-backed 'terrorists' were aiming to bring insecurity to Iran's national energy transfer routes."

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION NEWS CLIPS

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NRC NEWS:

NRC Chairman Says No Change In 50-mile Evacuation Zone For Japanese Nuclear Crisis (AP)

By Matthew Daly

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

WASHINGTON - The top US nuclear regulator said Monday he will not change a recommendation that US citizens stay at least 50 miles away from Japan's crippled nuclear power plant, even as he declared that the crisis in that country remains "static."

Gregory Jaczko, the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, acknowledged in an interview with The Associated Press that the month-old crisis in Japan has not yet stabilized. But he said conditions at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant have not changed significantly for several days.

"We describe the situation as static but not yet stable," Jaczko said.

"It hasn't really changed too much in the last few days," he added, but it will be weeks or even months before the plant is stabilized.

The March 11 earthquake and tsunami knocked out power at the Fukushima plant and reactors have been overheating ever since. In Japan on Tuesday, the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan raised the severity rating of the crisis from 5 to 7, the highest level and on par with the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Progress in stabilizing the complex comes slowly most days, or not at all, as new tremors and radiation repeatedly halt work. A new aftershock Monday briefly cut electricity to the plant and halted work while technicians took cover, but did not endanger operations, according to Japanese officials.

The Japanese government, meanwhile, added five communities Monday to a list of places people should leave to avoid long-term radiation exposure. A 12-mile radius has been cleared around the plant already.

Jaczko said the most important job at the plant still is keeping water in the spent fuel pools to cool the highly radioactive fuel rods, reducing the threat of a meltdown and a catastrophic release of radiation.

Jaczko, who traveled to Japan last month, said the NRC has begun a two-pronged approach to review the safety of the 104 commercial US nuclear reactors in the wake of the Japanese crisis. A 90-day review should be completed in June, with another report expected by the end of the year.

"We want this to be a very systematic and methodical review and make sure we identify all the important issues, and that we work with a sense of urgency and speed to address those issues in the appropriate way," he said, adding that he expects the reviews to result in recommendations for significant regulatory changes.

"Fundamentally, I expect that there will be some things we will want to change and need to change as a result of what comes out of this 90-day review and longer-term review, based on events in Japan," he said.

A task force made up of high-ranking NRC staff is conducting the two reviews, and the five-member commission will act quickly once the reports are released, Jaczko said.

On the 50-mile evacuation zone for US citizens in Japan, Jaczko called his March 16 recommendation "prudent" and said it was based on projections for continued deterioration at the plant. The Japanese government had set a 12-mile evacuation zone, and the US decision raised questions about US officials' confidence in Tokyo's risk assessments.

"I'm still very comfortable" with the decision, Jaczko said.

Asked whether he set up a double standard — one for nuclear plants in foreign countries and another for US plants, where a 10-mile evacuation zone is the current standard — Jaczko said no.

"I wouldn't say that's a contradiction," he said, noting that the 10-mile US evacuation zone refers to emergency planning prior to a nuclear disaster. If events warrant, a larger evacuation zone can be created.

"Ultimately, decisions about protective actions (in the event of a nuclear disaster) are made by state and local authorities," he said, not the NRC.

On another topic, Jaczko said he believes spent fuel can be stored safely either in pools or in dry cask storage. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., sent Jaczko a letter Monday urging the NRC to establish regulations that would encourage plant operators to move more quickly to store spent fuel in dry casks, rather than in pools that must be kept cooled.

Feinstein cited a 2006 study by the National Research Council indicating that dry cask storage systems have inherent safety advantages over spent fuel pools.

Jaczko disputed that, saying both methods are safe.

The United States has not had an accident involving spent fuel in decades, and spent fuel at commercial US reactors "continues to be safe and secure," even without a designated site to store nuclear waste, Jaczko said. The Obama administration has abandoned plans for a nuclear waste dump in Nevada, prompting sharp criticism from some lawmakers in both parties.

Jaczko declined to speculate on whether the Japanese crisis would cause a slowdown in a planned expansion of US nuclear reactors backed by President Barack Obama. Jaczko said the NRC has "a very robust system" to license reactors that takes into account a wide range of factors.

"Ultimately safety rests with the (plant operator)," he said. "It's our job to make sure they get there."

If the NRC considers plants unsafe, it will take corrective action, up to and including shutting down plants if necessary, Jaczko said.

Three US nuclear power plants — in South Carolina, Kansas and Nebraska — need increased oversight from federal regulators because of safety problems or unplanned shutdowns. But Jaczko said all 65 US nuclear plants in 31 states are operating safely.

Japan Nuke Crisis Not Yet Stable (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

— The top US nuclear regulator says he will not change a recommendation that US citizens stay at least 50 miles away from Japan's crippled nuclear power plant, even as he declared that the crisis in that country remains "static."

Gregory Jaczko, who is chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, acknowledged in an interview with The Associated Press today that the month-old crisis in Japan has not yet stabilized. But he said conditions at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant have not changed significantly for several days.

Jaczko said he personally made the decision to recommend that 50 miles was a safe distance from the crippled reactors. The Japanese government had set a 12-mile evacuation zone.

Jaczko's recommendation raised questions about US confidence in Tokyo's risk assessments.

US Lawmaker Calls For New Nuclear Waste Rules (REU)

By Ayesha Rascoe

Reuters, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Feinstein Urges NRC To Revamp Wet-storage Waste Policy (EPPM)

By Hannah Northey

E&ENews PM, April 12, 2011

Federal policies regarding the storing of spent nuclear fuel are flawed because they do not encourage reactor operators to move spent fuel rods from wet pools to dry storage systems, the chairwoman of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee told the Nuclear Regulatory Commission chairman.

In a letter sent Friday, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) told NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko that the commission should initiate a rulemaking to spur a "more rapid shift of spent fuel to dry casks."

NRC rules are out of step with 2006 safety recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council, said Feinstein, who leads the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development.

The council issued a report that found moving spent fuel from wet pools to dry cask storage systems once they are sufficiently cool decreases the amount of fuel at risk during an accident or attack and increases operators' ability to safeguard the material, Feinstein said.

The dispersion of radioactive material is also more likely to be contained if the spent fuel rods are in dry storage casks, the council found, and radioactive material can be more easily recovered because the casks can be plugged temporarily with "radiation-absorbing materials" until permanent fixes are available.

"Containing radiation from a compromised spent fuel pool is likely to be much more difficult, particularly if the overlying building collapsed preventing workers from reaching the pool," the council's report says.

Jaczko told Feinstein at a hearing last month that spent fuel can be stored safely in wet pools for up to 100 years and that wet storage is just as safe as dry storage systems (Greenwire, March 31).

In the United States, the bulk of spent nuclear fuel rods are stored in pools under at least 20 feet of water, which provides a radiation shield, NRC says. Current NRC regulations allow fuel to be re-racked within the pool and consolidated, depending on the size of the pool. Operators can move cooled fuel into dry storage systems or casks, which are steel cylinders that are either welded or bolted shut and placed into concrete structures.

Concern over spent fuel storage has grown since the March 11 earthquake and tsunami crippled Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex and spent fuel pool and caused radiation leaks.

Feinstein said the events in Japan show the United States must be prepared for any "unanticipated threats" and that spent fuel should be kept in smaller, easier to manage containers that are "distributed intelligently on a secure site."

Storage Of Used Nuclear Fuel Rods At TVA Plants, Elsewhere Stir Concern (TENN)

By Anne Paine

Tennessean, April 12, 2011

Tons of radioactive waste are piling up at the Tennessee Valley Authority's nuclear power plants and others around the country in water-filled pools that in many cases were not intended to hold so much.

At TVA's Browns Ferry plant, 100 miles south of Nashville in Athens, Ala., some of the used fuel rods have been steeping in water for decades.

While industry officials say it's safe and that operations in the US have extra safeguards, similar pools of spent fuel have released radioactive materials to the air after last month's earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Traces of radioactive iodine linked to the damaged Fukushima plant were detected in the air and rainwater last week in Tennessee and other states.

In contrast, the radioactive waste stored in dry casks at the Japanese nuclear plant remained secure.

In the United States, more than 75 percent of the radioactive waste at the nation's 104 commercial nuclear reactors sits in pools, according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The rest is in dry storage casks, mainly on site.

The pools nationwide were intended as a temporary rest stop where used fuel rods would partially cool before transport to a central location in the country for reprocessing or disposal.

With no such sites available, the used rods, which are in bundles called assemblies, have been placed closer together than planned and largely left in the pools.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission permits such packing. Still, TVA, for one, is considering a change.

"We're likely to do more dry cask storage now," TVA spokesman Ray Golden said. "Exactly how much I think still needs to be determined."

Critics, including the Union of Concerned Scientists, have said for years that the pools were a vulnerable part of a nuclear plant, and that the fuller one is, the greater the risk.

The NRC should require the transfer to dry storage casks made of concrete and steel when the waste rods are cool enough, not when pools are nearly full, they say.

TVA has transferred some waste to dry storage, but the public power producer will give little information on how much, saying it's a security matter.

"Every year we do at least five to 10 canisters to catch up, to get even more room in there because we are somewhat filled," said Preston Swafford, TVA's chief nuclear officer, as he stood 30 feet from a pool at Browns Ferry during a tour last month. He was referring to the plant's three cooling pools.

About two dozen casks, each holding 68 used fuel assemblies, sat outside the building. That's a considerably smaller number than those in the pool nearby. It could hold an estimated 2,500 old assemblies, and it had 1,800-1,900.

It's unclear how many of the bundles of used fuel assemblies in pools nationwide are older than the five to eight years it takes to cool off enough to move.

NRC and Nuclear Energy Institute spokesmen said they did not have that information. TVA officials would not release the specific data on its plants.

Golden gave only the totals for each of TVA's plants. Browns Ferry has 1,771 metric tons of radioactive waste in pools and casks combined. Sequoyah, about 20 miles northeast of Chattanooga, has a combined 1,174 metric tons.

At Watts Barr, about 60 miles southwest of Knoxville, 317 metric tons of waste are on site, all in the one pool there, where there's plenty of room. The one reactor there opened in 1996, with enough pool space to handle fuel from two reactors. A second reactor is due for completion next year. Storage plan scrapped

The nuclear industry had been waiting at least two decades for the federal government to build a long-term repository inside Yucca Mountain in Nevada. Nuclear wastes, hauled there from around the country, could be held for hundreds of thousands of years.

There are no nuclear power plants in Nevada, and strong opposition came from that state as well as elsewhere. Plans were abandoned, with President Barack Obama cutting funding for the project.

Over the years, dry cask storage has been developed as an option.

The containers can run \$800,000 to \$1.5 million apiece, though some say the price is relatively insignificant to the expense of generating electricity.

A 2003 paper, "Reducing the Hazards from Stored Spent Power-Reactor Fuel in the United States," published in Science and Global Security, advised that dense packing in pools makes it possible in case of water loss for the newer fuel rods to heat up and catch fire. That could spew radioactivity and start a chain-reaction fire to the older rods, resulting in extensive land contamination.

The possibilities also could make the pools an attractive target for terrorists, it said.

The NRC disputed the report, saying it overestimated the potential danger as well as the cost-benefits of moving more waste to dry storage sooner.

A 2006 report that Congress, the NRC and the Department of Homeland Security requested from the National Academies of Sciences found inherent security advantages in cask storage. They don't need water, pumps or electricity. They are sturdy and give off heat slowly.

Some today are licensed for 60 years but are generally thought to be good for at least 100.

NRC Commissioner Gregory B. Jaczko, who told Congress last month that the nuclear plants and pools in this country are safe, also sees advantages. He said during a Nuclear Energy Institute Dry Storage Information Forum in 2008:

"The most clear-cut example of an area where additional safety margins can be gained involves additional efforts to move spent nuclear fuel from pools to dry cask storage. ... I believe the NRC should develop new regulations which require spent fuel be moved to dry cask storage after it has been allowed to cool for five years."

That has not happened, but the situation in Japan may spur it.

"The fact that we saw the problems we did with spent fuel pools at Fukushima, I think, will cause people to look at that and the cost-benefit analysis to see if there's more benefit than they might have seen in the past," said Steven L. Krahn, Vanderbilt University professor of nuclear environmental engineering.

Cask sales are looking up, too. It can take a year or two from ordering to receipt, but companies say they believe they could keep up — even with a rush.

Joy Russell with Holtec International, one of the country's few cask manufacturers, said her firm has received new inquiries since the crisis in Japan. The company has a contract with TVA.

Tara Neider, former head of Transnuclear Inc. and now with Areva Federal Services, said demand was already good.

"I anticipate there's going to be a lot more business with what's going on in Japan," she said.

Fukushima's reactors are of the same General Electric design as those at several plants in this country, including Browns Ferry.

Officials say the US plants have extra safeguards, and the main issue in Japan was a total loss of power, so pumps failed to keep cooling water moving. Water began heating up to extreme temperatures and evaporating, leaving fuel rods exposed.

At Browns Ferry a series of backup systems would keep water pumping around the waste, Swafford said during the media tour.

In the nearby 384,000-gallon pool, the tops of bundles of 12-foot-long rods could be seen sunken in square, metal cubbyholes to keep them separated.

They lay 27 feet below the surface of the water, which stops radioactive isotopes from poisoning those nearby. An industrial-style tin roof covers this part of the plant, the kind blown to pieces in an explosion in Japan.

The thick concrete and steel sides and bottom of a cooling pool make it strong, Swafford said, even if the roof gives way.

A pool must temporarily hold a reactor's entire fuel supply every couple of years during refueling, so extremely hot, fresh fuel rods are sometimes in the pool. That was the case at one of the problem Fukushima pools.

The spent fuel rods stay in the pool and the rest, which can be used for four to six years, go back in the reactor. Dry casks do the job

Of all the updates since March 11 on the website of the Tokyo Electric Power Co., which owns Fukushima, one hopeful note was about its dry storage casks:

"On March 17th, we patrolled buildings for dry casks and found no signs of abnormal situation for the casks."

The crisis in Japan, in fact, showed that a highly dangerous pool accident is possible, said Arjun Makhijani with the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research.

"The vast majority of spent fuel, 60, 70, 80 percent, can be moved to dry casks," he said.

"TVA can lead the way. TVA can do this for the public in its region, make it a lot safer. I think it will get enormous credit if it does, even from critics like me."

On Deadline: NRC: 3 Workers Exposed To Radiation At Neb. Nuclear Plant (USAT)

By Melanie Eversley

USA Today, April 12, 2011

Three workers have been exposed to radiation at a nuclear plant near Brownsville, Neb., MSNBC is reporting.

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission announced Monday it was looking into the "unplanned radiation exposures" on April 3 at Cooper Nuclear Station, the news organization reported.

According to a news release on the NRC website, the exposures took place during a maintenance procedure during which the workers removed a tube contaminated with radioactive material through the bottom of the reactor vessel as opposed to through the top, which would normally be the procedure. As a result, radiation alarms were triggered, the release said.

The workers set the tube down and immediately left the area, according to the NRC.

"We want to understand why normal work practices were not followed," said Elmo Collins, NRC Region IV administrator.

"We want to take a look at the decision making that contributed to this event."

MSNBC posted a link to a map of the plant, which is south of Omaha.

US Inspects Cooper Nuclear Plant After Radiation Exposures (BLOOM)

By Simon Lomax

Bloomberg News, April 12, 2011

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission is inspecting a reactor at a Nebraska power plant after three workers received "unplanned radiation exposures" last week, the agency said.

The Nebraska Public Power District, which operates the Cooper Nuclear Station, doesn't believe the workers received higher doses than allowed under NRC regulations in the April 3 incident, the agency said today in a statement on its website.

The workers were exposed while removing a radioactive tube from the bottom of the reactor, rather than following procedure and taking it from the top, the NRC said. When radiation alarms were triggered, the workers set down the tube and immediately left the reactor area, the regulator said.

"We want to understand why normal work practices were not followed," Elmo Collins, a regional administrator for the NRC in Arlington, Texas, said in the statement.

The NRC announced the inspection at the Cooper plant, 23 miles south of Nebraska City, while conducting a 90-day safety review of all US reactors. The examination was prompted by a partial meltdown at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Dai-ichi plant in Japan, which was damaged by a March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

The Nebraska Public Power District will cooperate fully with the investigation, Mark Becker, a spokesman for the utility, said in an interview.

The plant was shut down on March 13 for refueling, Becker said. The plant is to restart later this month, he said. No radiation was released "external to the plant," he said.

3 Nuclear Plant Workers Exposed To Radiation; Feds Investigating (CNN)

CNN, April 12, 2011

(CNN) -- The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will investigate an incident at a Nebraska nuclear plant in which three workers were accidentally exposed to radiation, it said in a statement Monday.

The incident occurred April 3, when workers at the Cooper Nuclear Station near Brownville, Nebraska, "removed a long tube contaminated with highly radioactive material through the bottom of the reactor vessel, rather than through the top as is usually done, triggering radiation alarms." The workers put down the tube and immediately left the area, the statement said.

Officials at the facility do not believe the workers received radiation exposures over limits set by the NRC, the commission said.

The facility is operated by the Nebraska Public Power District. Commission inspectors, who began their work Monday, "will look at the circumstances and decision-making by NPPD officials that led to the exposures, review the licensee's response to the event, calculate the exposures the workers received and review corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence," the commission statement said.

A report will be issued within 45 days, according to the commission.

A nuclear crisis at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plant, triggered by a March 11 magnitude-9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami, has led to a renewed focus on nuclear power in the United States and abroad.

Blog: Open Channel: Three Workers Exposed To Radiation At Nebraska Nuclear Plant (MSNBC)

By Bill Dedman

MSNBC, April 12, 2011

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission announced Monday afternoon that it was investigating the "unplanned radiation exposures" of three workers on April 3, a week earlier, at the Cooper Nuclear Station near Brownville, Neb.

The NRC said it did not believe the exposure exceeded its limits.

"Workers removed a long tube contaminated with highly radioactive material through the bottom of the reactor vessel, rather than through the top as is usually done, triggering radiation alarms," the NRC reported. "The workers set the tube down and immediately left the area."

The Cooper plant has a single boiling-water reactor of General Electric design. (GE is a part owner of NBCUniversal, which owns half of msnbc.com.)

Here's a map of the plant, which is about 25 miles from Nebraska City, Neb., and south of Omaha.

The full release from the NRC:

NRC SENDS SPECIAL INSPECTION TEAM TO COOPER NUCLEAR STATION

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection at the Cooper Nuclear Station to review the circumstances surrounding a maintenance procedure that led to unplanned radiation exposures to three workers. The plant, located near Brownville, Neb., is operated by the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD).

Inspectors, who began their work Monday, will look at the circumstances and decision-making by NPPD officials that led to the exposures, review the licensee's response to the event, calculate the exposures the workers received and review corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence.

The incident occurred on April 3, when workers removed a long tube contaminated with highly radioactive material through the bottom of the reactor vessel, rather than through the top as is usually done, triggering radiation alarms. The workers set the tube down and immediately left the area. The licensee does not believe the workers received radiation exposures in excess of NRC limits.

"We want to understand why normal work practices were not followed, resulting in unplanned radiation exposures to three workers," said Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. "We want to take a look at the decision-making that contributed to this event."

The team consisting of two NRC inspectors, began work Monday and will probably spend several days at the plant. They will write an inspection report on their findings within 45 days of the end of the inspection that will be made publicly available.

Three Workers At Nebraska Plant Exposed To Radiation (WSJ)

By Tennille Tracy

Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Three Nebraska Nuclear Workers Exposed To Radiation (REU)

By Roberta Rampton, Greg McCune

Reuters, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

NRC Approves Power Increase At Limerick (PHILLY)

By Andrew Maykuth

Philadelphia (PA) Inquirer, April 11, 2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Monday announced it has approved a 1.65 percent-power increase by the two units of the Limerick Generating Station in Montgomery County.

The NRC approved Exelon Generation Co.'s request to increase the output because it could more accurately measure feedwater flow into the reactors. The "uprate" will allow the two boiling water reactors to increase output from 1,189 to 1,205 megawatts of electricity.

Increased Power Output At Limerick Approved By NRC (LANREP)

Lansdale (PA) Reporter, April 11, 2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved a request by Exelon Generation Company to increase the power generating capacity of Limerick Generating Station, Units 1 and 2, by 1.65 percent each.

The NRC staff's careful evaluation determined that Exelon could safely increase thereactors' power output primarily through more accurate means of measuring feedwater flow. As part of its evaluation, NRC staff reviewed the company's analysis showing the plant's design can accommodate the increased power level.

The NRC's safety evaluation of the plant's proposed power uprate focused on several areas, including the nuclear steam supply systems, instrumentation and control systems, electrical systems, accident evaluations, radiological consequences, fire protection, operations and training, testing, and technical specification changes.

The power uprate for Limerick's boiling-water reactors, located approximately 21 miles northwest of Philadelphia, will increase each unit's power generating capacity from approximately 1,189 to 1,205 megawatts electric. Exelon intends to implement Unit 1's uprate within 90 days, and Unit 2's uprate within 90 days of the completion of its 2011 spring refueling outage.

The NRC previously published a notice about the power uprate application in the Federal Register (<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-13617.pdf>, page 32512). The agency's Evaluation of the Limerick power uprate

will be available through the NRC's ADAMS electronic document database by entering ML110691095 under the "Simple Search" tab on this Web page:

<http://wba.nrc.gov:8080/ves/>.

Nuclear Power Plant Uprate Project Approved (POWGENWLD)

Power-Gen Worldwide, April 12, 2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has approved a request by Exelon Generation Co. to increase the power generating capacity of Limerick Generating Station, Units 1 and 2, by 1.65 percent each.

The NRC staff's evaluation determined that Exelon could safely increase the reactors' power output primarily through more accurate means of measuring feedwater flow. As part of its evaluation, NRC staff reviewed the company's analysis showing the plant's design can accommodate the increased power level.

The NRC's safety evaluation of the plant's proposed power uprate focused on several areas, including the nuclear steam supply systems, instrumentation and control systems, electrical systems, accident evaluations, radiological consequences, fire protection, operations and training, testing, and technical specification changes.

The power uprate for Limerick's GE boiling water reactors will increase each unit's power generating capacity from approximately 1,189 to 1,205 MWe. Exelon intends to implement Unit 1's uprate within 90 days and Unit 2's uprate within 90 days of the completion of its 2011 spring refueling outage.

Subscribe to Nuclear Power International magazine

Panel To Probe US Readiness For A Disaster Like Japan's (EED)

By Emily Yehle

E&E Daily, April 12, 2011

Lawmakers will discuss the lessons learned from the recent tsunami in Japan at a hearing this week on tsunami preparedness and interagency cooperation.

The House Oversight and Government Reform subcommittee on national security plans to meet Thursday to discuss whether the federal government is prepared to "warn, respond and assist" state and local governments in the event of a tsunami, according to a committee staffer. The witness list was not available by publication time.

The Japanese earthquake – and resulting tsunami – has incited concerns over the United States' warning system in recent weeks. Such a disaster would necessitate the cooperation of several agencies, including NOAA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local law enforcement agencies.

Earlier this month, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), the chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees NOAA, asked the agency to hold conferences on tsunami preparedness on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.

"The tragic events in Japan over the last month have made clear that we cannot afford to be unprepared for a tsunami," he wrote in a letter to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco.

NOAA scientists, meanwhile, have pushed for a new tsunami warning center in Puerto Rico. The country's two existing centers – in Hawaii and Alaska – could be wiped out in the same natural disaster, they say, and they argue that the Caribbean is ripe for major seismic activity and deserves a closer facility.

Last July, Puerto Rico Gov. Luis Fortuño (R) offered \$6 million toward the construction of a facility at the University of Puerto Rico's Mayagüez campus. But NOAA would have to commit to staffing the center and contributing an additional \$5 million for its construction.

Schedule: The hearing is Thursday, April 14, at 1:30 p.m. in 2154 Rayburn.

Witnesses: TBA.

CNBC's Fast Money: Nuclear Power Fears At New Heights Despite Safety, Viability (CNBC)

By John Melloy

CNBC, April 12, 2011

Japan may raise its nuclear crisis to a level seven from a level five, according to the Kyodo news agency. That level would equal Russia's Chernobyl disaster as the earthquake-plagued nation desperately tries to contain the amount of radiation admitted. The Three Mile Island accident in 1979 was a level 5.

Nuclear power-related shares are taking a hit, Germany may abolish nuclear power altogether in 12 years and iodine tablets are selling fast on the US West Coast as radiation fears reach new heights. The global overreaction from this rare 9.0

magnitude earthquake and massive tsunami that followed may set back the safest and easiest way for this country to solve its energy crisis, investors said.

"The Fukushima meltdown may mark a high point in anti-nuclear hysteria," said John Downs of Euro Pacific Capital, in a note to clients Monday. "As a result, investors should not treat nuclear-related stocks as if they were radioactive. Eventually, reason prevails, and the truth is that nuclear power is hands down the best option available for powering the 21st century."

Downs goes on to cite the rarity of these kinds of events in the 60-year history of the commercial nuclear energy, especially ones that cause civilian casualties.

"Although there may very well be deaths associated with the Japanese meltdown in the months and years to come, the only reactor incident to cause civilian deaths to date was Chernobyl, a poorly run facility in the bankrupt late-Soviet Union (amazingly built with no containment vessel)," said Downs.

But among the most intriguing stats that Downs includes in his report is that "the average coal plant releases 100 times more annual radiation than a comparable nuclear plant."

The analyst likely got this statistic from an article in "Scientific American" from three years ago, which used a similar statistic citing work from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and a 1978 paper in the "Science" journal.

"The fly ash emitted by a power plant – a by-product from burning coal for electricity – carries into the surrounding environment 100 times more radiation than a nuclear power plant producing the same amount of energy," according to the article from the magazine.

An article in today's New York Times, gives a bad name to the supposed other "clean" alternative, natural gas. While this fuel burns cleaner than other fossil fuels, the article states that the "planet-warming" methane gas released during the unconventional drilling process used today offsets that eventual benefit.

Shares of Shaw Group [SHAW Loading... ()], which builds power plants including nuclear ones, have taken a hit since the Japan disaster on concern global demand will decrease. It said Monday that revenue this year may miss the company's previous guidance. Still the CEO sounded hopeful in the press release.

"While the devastating events in Japan have drawn significant attention to the nuclear power industry, work on our nuclear power units currently under construction continues as planned," said J.M. Bernhard, chairman and chief executive officer of Shaw. "Additionally, Shaw's experience in performing construction services at nuclear power plants and emergency response services after natural disasters, positions us to assist with the recovery efforts in Japan and any future modification needs to existing power plants in the US and internationally."

Flour and Babcock & Wilcox, two other power infrastructure companies, are due to report in early May and early June respectively. Both have taken a hit from the Japan disaster and the subsequent not-in-my-backyard attitude. Still, these companies may have one champion still left: a pragmatic President.

"Nuclear energy doesn't emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere," said President Obama in a March 30th speech on clean energy following the Japan disaster. "To those of us concerned about climate change, we've got to recognize that nuclear power, if it's safe, can make a significant contribution to the climate change question. And I'm determined to ensure that it's safe."

For the best market insight, catch 'Fast Money' each night at 5pm ET, and the 'Halftime Report' each afternoon at 12:30 ET on CNBC.

John Melloy is the Executive Producer of Fast Money. Before joining CNBC, he was an editor for Bloomberg News, overseeing the US Stock Market coverage team.

Got something to say? Send us an e-mail at and your comment might be posted on the Rapid Recap! If you'd prefer to make a comment, but not have it published on our Web site, send your message to .

Trader disclosure: On April 11, 2011, the following stocks and commodities mentioned or intended to be mentioned on CNBC's "Fast Money" were owned by the "Fast Money" traders; Adami owns (AGU); Adami owns (C); Adami owns (GS); Adami owns (INTC); Adami owns (MSFT); Adami owns (NUE); Adami owns (BTU); Weiss is short (X); Weiss is short (RTH); Weiss is short (IWM); Weiss owns (VZ); Weiss owns (QCOM); Weiss owns (DVN); Weiss owns (COP); Weiss owns (BTU); Weiss owns (JPM); Weiss owns (MSFT); Terranova owns (JPM); Terranova owns (C); Terranova owns (VRTS); Terranova owns (UPL); Terranova owns (TCK); Terranova owns (BAX); Terranova owns (XOM); Terranova owns (AKAM); Karabell owns (AAPL); Karabell owns (BHP); Karabell owns (BIDU); Karabell is long (GOOG); Karabell owns (GS); Karabell owns (MRVL); Karabell Owns (SINA); Seymour owns (AA); Seymour owns (AAPL); Seymour owns (F); Seymour owns (INTC)

For Tim Seymour:

Seygem Asset Management Is Short (FCX) Weiss Owns (VZ)

For Anthony Scaramucci
SkyBridge Is A Fund Of Funds Manager
Funds Held May Or May Not Own The Recommended Securities
For Mike Khouw

Cantor Fitzgerald is a market maker in (CLX)

For Zach Karabell:

Karabell and River Twice Capital are long (CSCO)

Karabell and River Twice Capital are long (MON)

River Twice Capital is long (AMSC)

River Twice Capital is long (EXPE)

River Twice Capital is short (GS) puts

River Twice Capital is short (QQQQ)

River Twice Capital is short (XLF)

River Twice Capital is short (AA)

Karabell And River Twice Capital Own (MON), (NTES)

For Willie Williams

Societe Generale Facilitates Transactions In Tradable Currencies For Dennis Gartman

Funds Managed by Dennis Gartman are long Canadian Dollars

Funds Managed By Dennis Gartman are long crude

Funds Managed by Dennis Gartman are long nat gas

Funds Managed by Dennis Gartman are shot 10 yr canadian bonds

Funds Managed by Dennis Gartman are short 10 yr US treas. Notes

Funds Managed by Dennis Gartman are short euros.

For Joe Terranova

Terranova is Chief Market Strategist of Virtus Investment Partners, LTD

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (ABAX)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (AMKR)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (CCG)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (CASS)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (CSV1)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (EXR)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (FCFS)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (IGE)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (KRC)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (LDR)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (NCRI)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (DBV)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLB)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLV)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLP)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLY)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLE)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLF)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLI)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLK)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (XLU)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (WDFC)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of (YDNT)

Virtus Investment Partners Owns More Than 1% Of DOMINO'S PIZZA UK & IRL PLC

For Jon Najarian:

I own AA Call Spreads, no positions in DRRX, but moving in post & I am posting about it.

DRRX Primary endpoint was not met in ELADUR Phase II Study for Chronic Low Back Pain- In this study of 263 patients suffering from chronic low back pain, the primary efficacy endpoint

For Brian Sozzi

**No Disclosures

Stephen Weiss SOT from 3/22/11

**No Disclosures

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Future Of Energy Source Under Scrutiny (EED)

By Hannah Northey

E&E Daily, April 12, 2011

Senators this week will delve into the implications of Japan's nuclear crisis for the safety and future of nuclear power in the United States.

The full Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the committee's subpanel on clean air and nuclear safety will hear from a host of top energy regulators tomorrow about the role nuclear energy will play in the country's energy portfolio going forward.

US EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Gregory Jaczko will provide opening statements. The committee will then hear from a host of state regulators and lawmakers, especially from California, as well as Exelon Generation Chief Operating Officer Charles Pardee.

Although nuclear energy is seen as key to striking a balance between producing power and curbing greenhouse gases, regulators must now address heightened anxiety surrounding the operation and oversight of the reactors.

NRC has taken the lead role in reviewing the United States' fleet of 104 reactors following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that crippled Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex. Japanese officials are still struggling to gain control of the reactors on the country's east coast and US officials are trying to determine the status of the complex.

NRC is conducting a review of US reactors' safety systems, backup power and emergency response procedures through the coming summer. The commission has said lessons from the Japanese disaster will be incorporated into the safety of reactors across the nation.

Schedule: The hearing is tomorrow at 2:45 p.m. in the EPW Hearing Room, 406 Dirksen.

Witnesses: EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson; NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko; California state Sen. Sam Blakeslee (R); James Boyd, vice chairman of the California Energy Commission; Lewis Schiliro, Cabinet secretary of the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security; Curtis Sommerhoff, director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management, Exelon Generation Chief Operating Officer Charles Pardee; and Thomas Cochran, a senior scientist for the Natural Resources Defense Council's nuclear program.

Assistant Secretary For Nuclear Energy: Who Is Peter Lyons? (AGOV)

By David Wallechinsky

AllGov, April 12, 2011

A physicist and longtime member of the nation's premier research laboratory, Peter B. Lyons was nominated to be the Department of Energy

's assistant secretary for nuclear energy in December 2010. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is scheduled to vote on his nomination on April 12. The mission of the Office of Nuclear Energy is to promote nuclear power as an energy source. It does this with an annual budget of more than \$850 million.

Raised in Nevada, Lyons attended college in neighboring Arizona, receiving his bachelor's degree in physics and mathematics from the University of Arizona in 1964. Five years later, he earned his PhD in nuclear astrophysics from the California Institute of Technology.

After receiving his PhD, Lyons began his career at Los Alamos National Laboratory, and wound up spending 27 years at the renowned lab. He spent his first 15 years working on nuclear testing and other defense-related projects, and his next 10 years as a manager. Among the positions he led were group leader for transient plasma diagnostics, program director for nuclear

defense research, deputy associate director for defense research and applications and deputy associate director for energy and environment.

In late 1993 he was put in charge of the Industrial Partnership Office, which coordinated research between Los Alamos and private corporations.

In January 1997, Lyons was assigned by Los Alamos to take a leave of absence and serve as science advisor on the staff of US Senator Pete Domenici (R-New Mexico) and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, where, for six years, he focused on military and civilian uses of nuclear technology, national science policy and nuclear non-proliferation. He continued in this capacity after leaving the laboratory and officially joining the Senate staff in 2003.

President George W. Bush gave Lyons a recess appointment to serve as a commissioner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

(NRC). In May 2006, the Senate confirmed him for a full term, and he eventually served from January 25, 2005, until June 30, 2009. During this time he focused on the safety of operating reactors as new reactor licensing and possible construction emerged.

After his NRC term ended, Lyons worked briefly as a consultant to nuclear energy assistant secretary Warren "Pete" Miller . On September 14, 2009, Lyons was appointed to the position of principal deputy assistant secretary of the Office of Nuclear Energy

and served as acting assistant secretary upon Miller's retirement in November 2010. Miller and Lyons worked so closely together that Secretary of Energy Steven Chu referred to them as "Pete and Re-Pete."

Lyons has published more than 100 technical papers, holds three patents related to fiber optics and plasma diagnostics, and served as chairman of the NATO Nuclear Effects Task Group for five years. While at Los Alamos, Lyons served for 16 years on the Los Alamos School Board.

-David Wallechinsky, Noel Brinkerhoff

PG&E Wants Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant License Delay For Seismic Study (AP)

By Michael R. Blood

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

LOS ANGELES – The owner of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power complex asked federal regulators to delay issuing extended operating permits until comprehensive studies are completed on earthquake faults in the area, officials said Monday.

The move by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. came after a public outcry over possible safety risks at the California plant, which were heightened by the huge earthquake and tsunami that plunged Japan into a nuclear crisis.

Diablo Canyon, perched on an 85-foot bluff above the Pacific Ocean, sits within three miles of two earthquake faults. Lawmakers have been pushing the company to perform more thorough testing to assess earthquake risks before new licenses are granted.

More than 400,000 people live within 50 miles of the site, located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

At a legislative hearing last month, company officials said the plant was safe and gave no hint that PG&E would agree to complete three-dimensional seismic studies before a renewal of the licenses.

But in a statement Monday, PG&E Senior Vice President John Conway referred to the Japanese crisis and said, "we recognize that many in the public have called for this research to be completed before the NRC renews the plants' licenses. We are being responsive to this concern." The company wants the NRC to extend the life of the complex for 20 years after its permits expire in 2024 and 2025.

In a letter to the NRC dated Sunday, PG&E said it would be prudent to complete the studies prior to granting new licenses. The company said it wanted the NRC to hold off issuing new licenses, even if approved by the agency, until the three-dimensional studies are finished.

State Sen. Sam Blakeslee, a Republican whose district includes the site, commended the decision and said in a statement that "it's our duty to learn and apply the lessons of Japan." Senate Majority Leader Ellen M. Corbett, D-San Leandro, said "it is unfortunate that it took a major catastrophe in Japan and a (legislative) hearing to prompt quicker action." NRC spokeswoman Lara Uselding said the agency will consider the company's request to see what, if any, impact it would have on the agency's review schedule.

In its letter, the company said it wanted to complete the research no later than December 2015, which would be long before the current licenses expire.

Diablo Canyon, where reactors began operating in the mid-1980s, has a long history of seismic issues.

The discovery of the offshore Hosgri Fault in 1971, after the plant was mostly completed, forced a major, costly redesign. Then, about two years ago, a geologic fault was discovered about a half-mile from the seaside reactor, raising new concerns about safety.

At issue at Diablo Canyon is not what is known, but what is not. Preliminary research at the site found its twin reactors could withstand a potential earthquake generated by the recently identified Shoreline Fault, just off the coast.

But California regulators say more study is needed on the new fault system. The fear is the two faults could begin shaking in tandem, creating a larger quake than either fault would be capable of producing on its own.

PG&E says the plant is built to withstand a magnitude-7.5 earthquake, the maximum considered possible for the site.

PG&E Wants Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant License Delay For Seismic Study (AP)

By Michael R. Blood

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

LOS ANGELES— The owner of California's Diablo Canyon nuclear power complex has asked federal regulators to delay issuing extended operating permits until comprehensive studies are completed on earthquake faults in the area.

There has been an outcry over possible safety risks since a fault was discovered less than a half-mile from the coastal site near San Luis Obispo, a concern heightened by the Japanese nuclear crisis.

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. wants the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to renew its license for 20 years to operate the twin reactors. The permits expire in 2024 and 2025. The company says the plants are safe.

In a letter to the NRC dated Sunday, the company says it would be "prudent" to complete the studies prior to granting new licenses for the site along the Central Coast.

PG&E Wants Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant's Relicensing To Be Delayed For Seismic Testing (LAT)

By David Sarno

Los Angeles Times, April 12, 2011

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. has asked federal authorities to delay the license renewal proceedings for its Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant until more thorough seismic testing of the area around the plant can be performed.

In the wake of the earthquake and nuclear crisis in Japan, people have been calling for advanced seismic testing around California's nuclear plants.

In 2009, PG&E applied to renew the licenses for its two nuclear reactors in San Luis Obispo County, which expire in 2024 and 2025. The renewal application process can take years.

"In light of recent events at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, and the considerable public concern regarding the need to assure the seismic safety at DCP, PG&E has decided it is most prudent to have completed certain seismic studies at [Diablo Canyon] prior to issuance" of the renewed federal operating licenses," the utility said in a statement.

Though Diablo Canyon's engineers assured public officials in the late 1960s that the area around the plant had only "insignificant faults," at least two faults have been discovered since its construction, including one in 2008 less than a mile away.

That fault, called Shoreline, is thought by geologists to be capable of producing a magnitude 6.5 quake. The other fault, called Hosgri, is rated up to 7.3.

California energy authorities and legislators have asked PG&E to perform thorough studies of the seismic risks near the plant before it seeks a 20-year renewal of the licenses for its nuclear reactors.

"I commend PG&E for taking the responsible action of delaying relicensing until critical seismic questions are answered," said state Sen. Sam Blakeslee (R-San Luis Obispo). "We respect that this is a difficult decision that demonstrates their willingness to prioritize the safety of Californians."

PG&E Asks For Delay In License Renewal For Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant (SLOT)

By David Sneed

San Luis Obispo (CA) Tribune, April 12, 2011

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. has sent a letter to the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission asking it to delay final implementation of license renewal at Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant until the utility can complete advanced seismic studies of the plant.

That could delay license renewal through 2015.

The California Public Utilities Commission has joined a chorus of agencies and elected officials who are calling for a closer look at the seismic safety of Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant after the nuclear emergency in Japan.

But the commission is different than other state and local government agencies. It wields indirect authority over Diablo Canyon because it controls PG&E's purse strings.

The federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission holds preemptive authority over all aspects of safety and operation of the nation's 104 nuclear reactors.

SLO County supervisors raise Diablo concerns

SLO County supervisors raise Diablo concerns

Three of five county supervisors Tuesday called on PG&E to voluntarily suspend its drive to renew operating licenses for Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant until extensive earthquake safety studies can be completed.

The decision came after hours of public testimony by nearly 50 people about the safety of Diablo Canyon in light of the recent earthquake and tsunami in Japan that caused radiation leaks from several crippled nuclear reactors.

Supervisor Adam Hill, whose district includes the nuclear plant, said the recent tragedy in Japan has sharpened the public's concern about earthquake safety and reduced the public's trust of PG&E's assurances of the plant's safety. He will draft a letter to be brought back for the board's approval asking PG&E for peer-reviewed seismic studies before the utility proceeds with license renewal.

Officials may seek Diablo license delay

Officials may seek Diablo license delay

As promised, county supervisors Tuesday will vote whether to send a letter to PG&E asking it to suspend the relicensing of Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant until seismic studies have been completed and verified.

The letter was put on the agenda by Supervisor Adam Hill, whose district includes the power plant. Approval of the letter is considered all but certain given that a majority of the board has already expressed support for it.

Addressed to PG&E President Chris Johns, the letter says that staying license renewal would be a good way for the utility to restore the trust of the community. The letter cites an interview Johns gave The Tribune shortly after the earthquake and nuclear disaster in Japan in which he admitted that the company needs to "earn its customers' trust."

The letter, dated Sunday, cites the nuclear accident in Japan as well as an outpouring of public concern over earthquake safety at Diablo Canyon as the reasons for the request. This is the first time the NRC has received such a request.

"PG&E therefore requests that the commission delay the final processing of the LRA (license renewal application) such that the renewed operating licenses, if approved, would not be issued until after PG&E has completed the 3-D seismic studies and submitted a report to the NRC addressing the results of those studies," wrote John Conway, PG&E's chief nuclear officer.

PG&E Delays Licensing To Study Diablo Canyon Fault (SFC)

By David R. Baker, Chronicle Staff Writer

San Francisco Chronicle, April 12, 2011

Bowing to pressure from government officials, Pacific Gas and Electric Co. has asked federal regulators to delay relicensing the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant until the company finishes in-depth studies of a recently discovered earthquake fault.

The utility, California's largest, has asked the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission to postpone making a final decision on the company's request to extend the licenses of Diablo's two reactors.

The company plans to conduct advanced seismic studies of the nearby Shoreline Fault, studies that may take until December 2015 to complete.

Little is known about the fault, first identified in 2008. Ever since an earthquake and tsunami crippled a nuclear plant in Japan last month, a growing number of California officials have demanded that PG&E conduct further studies on the Shoreline Fault before pressing ahead with license renewal. Diablo Canyon sits on a seismically active stretch of the Central California coast near San Luis Obispo.

"We recognize that many in the public have called for this research to be completed before the NRC renews the plant's licenses," said John Conway, the San Francisco company's chief nuclear officer.

He said the studies would help assure regulators and the plant's neighbors that the facility is safe.

California state Sen. Sam Blakeslee, who trained as a geophysicist, had demanded that PG&E perform those studies before Diablo's operating licenses could be renewed. He wrote a bill in 2009 that would have forced PG&E to conduct the studies, but it was vetoed by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"I commend PG&E for taking the responsible action of delaying relicensing until critical seismic questions are answered," said Blakeslee, R-San Luis Obispo.

The Diablo reactors' current licenses expire in 2024 and 2025.

E-mail David R. Baker at dbaker@sfchronicle.com.

PG&E Puts Off Licensing To Study Faults (SANTAMAR)

By April Charlton

Santa Maria (CA) Times, April 12, 2011

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. has agreed to undertake advanced 3-D seismic studies of the ocean's floor and earthquake faults near its Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, delaying the relicensing process until completion of those studies.

Officials made the announcement late Monday afternoon, less than 24 hours before the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors was expected to hold a public hearing on the issue.

"We are still going to do so and probably still going to send the letter," said board Chairman Adam Hill.

Hill, whose district includes the plant, said he believes that PG&E should completely pull back from the relicensing process and focus all of its efforts on the safety of Diablo Canyon.

"I think it's a step in the right direction," Hill said about PG&E's announcement. "But they could do more."

The supervisors agreed March 29 to hold a public hearing today to discuss sending a letter to PG&E requesting the electric company stop the relicensing process until the 3-D seismic studies are complete.

PG&E has applied to the NRC to extend the power plant's current operating licenses for an additional 20 years. One of Diablo's reactor's license expires in 2024 and the other in 2025.

Hill said "focusing solely on the seismic studies" is the most credible way for PG&E to move forward in its quest to extend the life of Diablo Canyon and show the public it is committed to safety at the plant.

"It's still about the message that you are sending to your people," Hill said.

PG&E officials have said publicly that they want to restore the public's trust in the company.

In a letter to the NRC dated Sunday, PG&E said it would be prudent to complete the studies prior to granting new licenses. The company said it wanted the NRC to hold off issuing new licenses, even if approved by the agency, until the three-dimensional studies are finished.

"We recognize that many in the public have called for this research to be completed before the NRC renews the plant's licenses," John Conway, PG&E's senior vice president of energy supply and chief nuclear officer, said in a statement issued Monday.

"We are being responsive to this concern by seeking to expeditiously complete the 3-D seismic studies and provide those findings to the commission and other interested parties so that they may have added assurance of the plant's seismic integrity," he added.

The county is willing to work with PG&E to expedite the permitting process for the seismic studies, Hill said.

"We want them to move forward," he added.

State Sen. Sam Blakeslee, a Republican whose district includes Diablo Canyon, commended the decision, and said in a statement that "it's our duty to learn and apply the lessons of Japan."

NRC spokeswoman Lara Uselding said the agency will consider PG&E's request to see what, if any, impact it would have on the agency's review schedule.

In its letter, the utility company said it wanted to complete the research no later than December 2015, which would be long before the current licenses expire.

At issue at Diablo Canyon is not what is known but what is not. Preliminary research at the site found its twin reactors could withstand a potential earthquake generated by the recently identified Shoreline Fault, just off the coast.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Diablo Plant Delays License Bid For Quake Study (WSJ)

By Ben Casselman And Stephen Power

Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

PG&E Seeks Delay In Diablo Canyon Nuclear Renewal (REU)

By Eileen O'Grady

Reuters, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

PG&E Continuing Its Nuclear License Renewal Application (BLOOM)

By Mark Chediak

Bloomberg News, April 12, 2011

PG&E Corp. (PCG), owner of California's largest utility, is continuing to seek license renewals for its Diablo Canyon nuclear plant while it conducts a study of the earthquake risks at the site.

If its application is approved, PG&E asked the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission to hold off issuing the final licenses until the company has received the results of the seismic analysis, the company said in a statement today. The utility will not suspend the renewal process as part of its request, spokesman Paul Flake said in a telephone interview.

PG&E applied in November 2009 to renew the reactor licenses, which expire in 2024 and 2025, according to the commission's website.

After a March 11 earthquake and tsunami knocked out power to a nuclear plant in Japan, triggering radiation releases and a partial meltdown, California lawmakers have called on PG&E to suspend its request to extend the life of its Diablo Canyon reactors until seismic studies can assess the risks. One reactor is 25 years old and the other 26 years. In August 2010, PG&E received funding from state regulators to conduct the risk analysis, which was recommended by the state in 2008, according to an April 10 letter sent by the company to the commission.

"We recognize that many in the public have called for this research to be completed before the NRC renews the plant's licenses," PG&E's Chief Nuclear Officer John Conway said in the statement.

PG&E expects to complete its seismic report no later than December 2015, the company said in its letter to the commission. The commission is considering the potential impact PG&E's request might have on the timing of the license renewal, Eliot Brenner, a spokesman for the commission, said in an e-mail statement.

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PG&E Halts Diablo Canyon Relicensing (PACBT)

Pacific Coast Business Times, April 12, 2011

Moving quickly to short-circuit a potential conflict with political and business leaders, Pacific Gas & Electric on April 11 abruptly asked federal regulators to pause the relicensing of the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant near San Luis Obispo.

In seeking the delay, PG&E said it would not go forward with its effort to extend the life of the plant for an additional 20 years to 2045 until an assessment of seismic risk is completed.

US Rep. Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara, welcomed the delay but said a voluntary pause in the licensing proceedings wasn't enough. She said she was seeking a suspension of the relicensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission until a full range of earthquake risks are assessed.

The Fukushima Daiichi earthquake-tsunami disaster in northeastern Japan has rocked what looked like a relatively smooth relicensing process for Diablo Canyon.

Republican State Sen. Sam Blakeslee and Capps have been vocal in calling for PG&E to complete extensive studies of seismic risk prior to any relicensing by the NRC. The discovery of a new fault less than a mile from the plant several years ago has raised fresh questions about earthquake risks in the vicinity of the plant.

PG&E officials have maintained they can operate the plant in a safe and sound manner despite the presence of earthquake faults. But some business leaders have questioned the wisdom of relicensing the facility before a risk assessment is made public. PG&E has outlined a plan to address them.

PG&E Will Do 3-D Seismic Studies Before Finalizing Nuclear Relicensing (SANTAMAR)

Santa Maria (CA) Times, April 12, 2011

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. plans to undertake advanced 3-D seismic studies related to Diablo Canyon Power Plant before relicensing at the nuclear facility is finalized, the company announced today.

PG&E officials asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) today to delay final action on the utility's on-going license renewal application until the seismic studies findings are submitted to the commission.

"In the wake of the tragic accident at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, we know that many of our customers and government partners are concerned and want to know more about the seismic characteristics surrounding the Diablo Canyon Power Plant," John Conway, PG&E's Senior Vice President of Energy Supply and Chief Nuclear Officer, said in a statement.

PG&E plans to undertake high-energy, offshore 3-D studies of the Shoreline fault's deeper regions as soon as the electric company obtains necessary permits from various regulatory agencies, including the state Lands Commission, California Coastal Commission and San Luis Obispo County.

"As PG&E works toward this objective, we are asking the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to withhold issuance of (the) renewed operating licenses, if approved, until after this research is completed and the findings are submitted to the commission," Conway added.

To address public concern regarding the seismicity of the area surrounding Diablo Canyon, PG&E is seeking to expedite the permitting process. PG&E also plans to conduct significant research of the faults in Los Osos Valley and in the Irish Hills.

Diablo Canyon Nuclear Reactor License Extension Delayed (POWGENWLD)

Power-Gen Worldwide, April 12, 2011

Pacific Gas & Electric Co. has asked the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission to delay a license extension for its Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant until studies are complete on nearby earthquake faults.

Concern has been heightened following the March 11 earthquake and subsequent nuclear crisis in Japan, according to the Associated Press.

PG&E asked the NRC for a 20-year license renewal for the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant near San Luis Obispo, where a fault was discovered less than a half-mile away. Licenses for both reactors expire in 2024 and 2025.

The company said the reactors are safe, but told the NRC it would be "prudent" to complete the studies.

Subscribe to Nuclear Power International

PG&E Addresses Community Concerns About Diablo Canyon (KSBY)

By Bill Halter

KSBY-TV San Luis Obispo (CA), April 12, 2011

The nuclear crisis in Japan has many worried about the safety of Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. On Monday, PG&E responded to community concerns. PG&E has asked the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to delay final action on the utility's license renewal application. It says it wants to complete a high energy, 3-D seismic study around Diablo Canyon before the license request is looked at. The power plant's current license runs through 2024.

"We've heard our customers concerns and the concerns of our government partners regarding PG&E conducting the seismic research prior to receiving the license renewal at Diablo Canyon. Now we've taken action to address those concerns" says PG&E spokesperson Kory Raftery.

David Weisman from the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility says advanced seismic testing is a step in the right direction but not far enough. Weisman says they need more thorough testing to determine the areas safety and that the NRC can't be trusted to judge the safety of Diablo Canyon. "The last time that we allowed PG&E and the NRC to be the ones who determined the seismic fate of Diablo Canyon, in the 60's and the 70's and the 80's, it ended up costing us over \$4.5 billion. That's a mistake California can't afford to make this time around. There past history in this county shows that when they work together with PG&E alone and there was no independent monitoring of that, there were many seismic miscalculations" says Weisman.

PG&E geoscientists will conduct the seismic studies, the 3-D studies will help them better understand the topography underneath the ocean water.

Coastal Commission Eyes Implications Of Japanese Quake On California (CapWeekly)

By John Howard

Capitol Weekly, April 12, 2011

Despite 1,100 miles of coastline and a history of powerful earthquakes, most of California is not susceptible to the kind of temblor and tsunami that devastated Japan, according to a report by the California Coastal Commission.

But there is a cautionary note: The area known as the Cascadia Subduction Zone, which runs from about 25 miles off Eureka to north of Vancouver, B.C. That zone, where a jumble of tectonic plates meet deep below the earth's continental crust, could produce a quake – and tsunami – on the scale of Japan's Tohoku Quake.

The 21-page study by staff geologist Mark Johnsson, released March 24 and presented to the commission members, noted that the majority of faults in California, including the San Andreas fault, could not produce a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and that most of the state "is not susceptible to an event on the scale of the Tohoku Earthquake" that struck Japan on March 11.

To produce a magnitude 9 quake, faults must be deep and wide, the study noted, and California's seismic faults are shallow.

"A magnitude 9 earthquake requires rupturing a fault surface thousands of square miles in area. The shallow faults making up most of California's fault systems, including the San Andreas, simply do not have sufficient area to generate such an earthquake."

"Nevertheless, " the report noted, "it is important not to become complacent; large earthquakes are inevitable throughout coastal California, and could be devastating in their own right. There is a large population and much infrastructure at risk in central and southern coastal California."

But while most faults are shallow, the crucial exception is along the 800-mile-long Cascadia Subduction Zone, where a number of plates are moving and being thrust under the North America plate under the continental crust. There are two sets of fracture zones in the Cascadia Subduction Zone that are zones of weakness. "Most seismologists agree that a megathrust earthquake involving any of these plates would be in the magnitude 9 range, similar to the Tohoku quake," the report said.

The Japanese quake and tsunami killed about 13,000 people, a figure that includes a dozen people killed last week in a 7.4 magnitude aftershock. Much of the loss of life and property damage occurred when the quake-spawned tsunami averaging about 30-foot-high struck the northern Japanese coast and pushed inland about six miles.

The quake also damaged nuclear power plants at the Japan's Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Station, leading to explosions and radioactive leakage.

In California, that nuclear scenario appeared "extremely unlikely," according to the report.

"The combination of strong ground motion and massive tsunami that occurred in Japan cannot be generated by faults near the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station and the Diablo Canyon Power Plant," the study said. "Nevertheless, the geologic conditions near those plants are very likely different than previously believed and ongoing study is warranted. This has been understood for at least the past three years, and some of these studies, and the environmental planning process for other such studies, are under way."

San Onofre Nuclear Plant To Hold Meltdown Drill (KGTV)

KGTV-TV San Diego (CA), April 12, 2011

SAN ONOFRE, Calif. –

Southern California radiation experts and emergency workers will take part in a drill on Tuesday to test responses to an emergency at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, an exercise that is done every other year but has taken on added significance because of the disaster in Japan.

The drills on site at the San Onofre plant will be done in secret, but other officials will gather at a Joint Information Center, where they will simulate news conferences as they practice how to disseminate information in case of a disaster.

Drills are conducted at the San Onofre plant a few times a year, but this biennial one is a much more extensive test that is monitored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Edison spokesman Gil Alexander said.

Alexander also said everyone is ready for both the drill and for a real emergency.

"We've worked hard at it. We have a plan. We work the plan. I think we're ready to swing into action," he said. "We drill constantly... three or four times a year. We meet every month. We've done that since 1982."

The main difference this year is the interest from the media, according Tina Walker, a spokesman for the California Emergency Management Agency. She said that is a positive change, because Southern California residents should know how to be prepared for an emergency.

"One of the key steps is to know the resources in your local jurisdiction," Walker said. "The best way someone can protect themselves and their family is to know your local resources. Speak to your local officials on emergency planning and once you get that information under your belt you'll be prepared for anything."

Alexander said Edison hopes the increased coverage of the drills will help calm some fears as the earthquake-crippled Fukushima reactor in Japan continues to stoke anxiety about radioactive leaks.

"We're hopeful the news stories this week will show our extensive planning efforts," Alexander said. "We hope the reports on all of this will be reassuring to the public."

The drill at San Onofre will simulate a radioactive leak that goes beyond the plant's boundaries and into the community, Alexander said. San Onofre has never had a radioactive gas leak in its 42 year history.

FEMA officials will hold a meeting at 4 p.m. Friday at the Capistrano Unified School District offices in San Juan Capistrano to give the public a "snapshot" view of how the drills went, said FEMA spokesman John Hamill.

In about three months, FEMA will issue its "report card" on the drill, Hamill said.

The California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors starting Tuesday, and concluding Thursday.

Workers will test emergency shut-down procedures and practice securing radioactive fuel rods.

San Onofre's two reactors generate 2.1 billion watts of electricity when operating at full capacity. Both units were returned to 99 percent operations this year, after extensive rebuilding projects.

Emergency and public health workers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties will participate in the drill.

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Radioactive Gas Leak Drill Set For San Onofre Nuclear Plant This Week (LADN)

Los Angeles Daily News, April 12, 2011

SANTA ANA - Radiation experts and emergency workers from Los Angeles to the Mexican border will pretend that a major radioactive gas leak has occurred at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station starting Tuesday.

The test is regularly-scheduled, but occurs as a major meltdown is threatened at an earthquake-crippled reactor complex in Japan, 5,500 miles across the sea.

The California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors starting Tuesday, and concluding Thursday.

Southern California Edison spokesman Gil Alexander told the San Diego Union-Tribune that workers will test emergency shut-down procedures, and practice securing radioactive fuel rods.

"There are a total of about 200 of us associated with the plant that will drill," Alexander told the San Diego newspaper. Half of those will drill on plant procedures, and the other half will work on a pretend radiation leak with government officials, the news media and the general public.

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Emergency and public health workers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties will participate in the drill.

Emergency Response Tests At San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (KCBS)

KCBS-TV Los Angeles, April 12, 2011

SANTA ANA (CBS) — Emergency and public health workers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties will take part in a drill to test emergency responses at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, tomorrow.

Southern California radiation experts and emergency workers will take part in a secret drill exercise that will simulate a radioactive leak that goes beyond the plant's boundaries and into the community. Workers will test emergency shut-down procedures and practice securing radioactive fuel rods. Other officials will gather at a Joint Information Center, where they will simulate news conferences and practice how to disseminate information in case of a disaster.

The exercise is done every other year but has taken on added significance this year because of the disaster in Japan.

"One of the key steps is to know the resources in your local jurisdiction," said Tina Walker, a spokesman for the California Emergency Management Agency. "The best way someone can protect themselves and their family is to know your local resources. Speak to your local officials on emergency planning and once you get that information under your belt you'll be prepared for anything."

The California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors starting Tuesday, and end Thursday. The organization hopes to calm public fear about radioactive leaks as the earthquake-crippled Fukushima reactor in Japan continues to stoke anxiety.

Officials from The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will hold a meeting at 4 p.m. Friday at the Capistrano Unified School District offices in San Juan Capistrano to give the public a "snapshot" view of how the drills went, said FEMA spokesman John Hamill. In three months, FEMA will issue its "report card" on the drill, Hamill said.

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Emergency Drill Set For Tuesday At San Onofre Nuclear Plant (SJCP)

San Juan Capistrano Patch, April 12, 2011

Southern California radiation experts and emergency workers will take part in a drill Tuesday to test responses to an emergency at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, an exercise that is done every other year but has taken on added significance because of the disaster in Japan.

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Drills are conducted at the San Onofre plant a few times a year, but this biennial one is a much more extensive test that is monitored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Edison spokesman Gil Alexander said.

The main difference this year is the interest from the media, according to Tina Walker, a spokesperson for the California Emergency Management Agency. She said that is a positive change, because Southern California residents should know how to be prepared for an emergency.

"One of the key steps is to know the resources in your local jurisdiction," Walker said. "The best way someone can protect themselves and their family is to know your local resources. Speak to your local officials on emergency planning and once you get that information under your belt, you'll be prepared for anything."

Alexander said Edison hopes the increased coverage of the drills will help calm some fears as the earthquake-crippled Fukushima reactor in Japan continues to stoke anxiety about radioactive leaks.

"We're hopeful the news stories this week will show our extensive planning efforts," Alexander said. "We hope the reports on all of this will be reassuring to the public."

The drill at San Onofre will simulate a radioactive leak that goes beyond the plant's boundaries and into the community, Alexander said.

FEMA officials will hold a meeting at 4 p.m. Friday at the Capistrano Unified School District offices in San Juan Capistrano to give the public a "snapshot" view of how the drills went, said FEMA spokesman John Hamill.

In about three months, FEMA will issue its "report card" on the drill, Hamill said.

The California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors starting Tuesday, and concluding Thursday.

Workers will test emergency shut-down procedures and practice securing radioactive fuel rods.

San Onofre's two reactors generate 2.1 billion watts of electricity when operating at full capacity. Both units were returned to 99 percent operations this year, after extensive rebuilding projects.

Emergency and public health workers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties will participate in the drill.

San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station Holding Emergency Drill Tuesday (ENPTCH)

By Jennifer Reed

Encinitas Patch, April 12, 2011

Radiation experts and emergency workers from Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside and San Diego will pretend that a major radioactive gas leak has happened at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station starting Tuesday.

The test is regularly scheduled, but happens to be occurring as a major meltdown is threatened at an earthquake-crippled reactor complex in Japan, 5,500 miles across the sea.

The California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors starting Tuesday and concluding Thursday.

San Onofre's two reactors generate 2.1 billion watts of electricity when operating at full capacity. Both units were returned to 99 percent operations this year, after extensive rebuilding projects.

Southern California Edison spokesman Gil Alexander told the San Diego Union-Tribune that workers will test emergency shut-down procedures, and

practice securing radioactive fuel rods.

City News Service contributed to this report.

Nuclear Emergency Drill Planned For San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant (XETV-TV)

XETV-TV San Diego, April 12, 2011

SAN ONOFRE - Radiation experts and emergency workers from to the Mexican border will pretend that a major radioactive gas leak has occurred at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station next week.

The test is regularly-scheduled, but occurs as a major meltdown is threatened at an earthquake-crippled reactor complex in Japan, 5,500 miles across the sea.

The California Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the test at the two nuclear reactors in north San Diego County starting Tuesday, and concluding Thursday.

Southern California Edison spokesman Gil Alexander says workers will test emergency shut-down procedures, and practice securing radioactive fuel rods.

"There are a total of about 200 of us associated with the plant that will drill," Alexander said. Half of those will drill on plant procedures, and the other half will work on a pretend radiation leak with government officials, the news media and the general public.

San Onofre's two reactors generate 2.1 billion watts of electricity when operating at full capacity. Both units were returned to 99 percent operations this year, after extensive rebuilding projects.

The oceanfront plant is located between the beach and I-5, west of Camp Pendleton.

Emergency and public health workers from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Diego counties will participate in the drill.

NRC Sets Capistrano Hearing On San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station Performance (SANCT)

By David Zimmerle

San Clemente (CA) Times, April 12, 2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet in San Juan Capistrano on April 28 with representatives of Southern California Edison Co. to discuss the agency's 2010 assessment of safety performance at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, will begin at 6 p.m. at the Capistrano Unified School District Board Room, 33122 Valle Road, San Juan Capistrano.

Following the performance assessment, the NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public concerning San Onofre, as well as the NRC's role in ensuring safe plant operation.

The NRC continually reviews the performance of San Onofre and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities, NRC Region IV Administrator Elmo Collins said. This meeting will provide an opportunity for a discussion of our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and with local officials and residents who live near the plant.

A letter sent from the NRC Region IV office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during 2010 and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/sano_2010q4.pdf.

San Onofre operated safely in 2010. The licensee addressed longstanding concerns in the area of problem identification and resolution, but has not been fully successful in addressing several longstanding human performance issues, the NRC said. The NRC will conduct additional focused inspections in the human performance area, and also in the safety conscious work environment area to verify that corrective actions are effective and sustainable.

Inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by specialists from the Region IV Office in Arlington, Texas.

Current performance information for San Onofre Unit Two is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SANO2/sano2_chart.html.

Current performance information for San Onofre Unit 3 is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SANO3/sano3_chart.html

Court: Mass. Can Regulate Nuke Water Intake System (BOS)

Boston Globe, April 12, 2011

BOSTON—The state's highest court has ruled that Massachusetts environmental officials have the power to regulate a water intake system used by the Pilgrim nuclear power plant in Plymouth.

The Supreme Judicial Court's decision issued on Tuesday reverses a lower court ruling that said the state Department of Environment lacked such authority.

Pilgrim employs a cooling system that pulls in water from Cape Cod Bay and later discharges heated water through outflow pipes. While the discharges are regulated by the state and federal governments, Entergy Corp., which owns Pilgrim, challenged whether the state also has the power to regulate the intake process.

Environmental officials say the intake system uses underwater suction that can kill or injure marine life.

The SJC decision was written by Justice Judith Cowin before her retirement last week.

SJC Upholds State's Right To Regulate Water Intake At Pilgrim Nuclear (BOS)

By Beth Daley

Boston Globe, April 12, 2011

The state Supreme Judicial Court has upheld Massachusetts' right to regulate the intake of vast amounts of water by the Pilgrim Nuclear Station and other power plants, which can harm fish and other marine organisms.

Power plants use the water to cool equipment then discharge it later – and hotter – into waterways. Environmental studies show the heated water can harm aquatic life. The state and environmentalists have also long argued that the sucking in of water can kill vast amounts of fish larvae, eggs, shellfish, and other aquatic organisms – larger creatures become trapped on screens covering the intake pipes, and smaller ones are sucked into the cooling system.

The state Department of Environmental Protection has long regulated the intake and discharge of water used at power plants. But Entergy, the owner of Pilgrim, sued four years ago after the state issued specific regulations spelling out its authority to do so. Entergy argued that the state had authority to regulate only the discharge of water, not its intake.

"This is great news for the Massachusetts environment," said Kenneth L. Kimmell, commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection. "It clearly gives us the ability to protect our aquatic resources from the potential harms (of intake)."

The SJC, reversing a Superior Court decision, said Pilgrim took too narrow a view of the state's authority and that it has the right to regulate the water intake.

Entergy issued a statement saying, "This decision affirms that the State of Massachusetts has the legal authority to regulate cooling water intake structures within the state. ... According to both the court and the state, this is no new authority for the agency."

The ruling comes as the federal government develops final rules for water intake at power plants. The decision, according to Kimmell, made clear that Massachusetts will have the right to maintain stricter rules if the federal regulations turn out to be weaker.

Kimmell said the decision also recognized the state environmental agency's ability to regulate emerging problems that are not specifically spelled out in state law.

"The court makes clear that our agency has the authority to protect our natural resources from emerging environmental threats," he said.

The Pilgrim plant, which is seeking to be re-licensed for another two decades after its original license expires next year, has been in the spotlight in recent weeks because it has a similar design to the most crippled Japanese nuclear reactor. Entergy said the SJC decision has no impact on relicensing.

The state Attorney General's Office, which argued the case, issued a statement saying, "Power plants, such as Entergy's Pilgrim Station in Plymouth, withdraw billions of gallons of water from the nation's waterways each day to cool their facilities. We are pleased that the SJC recognized the important role that MassDEP plays in protecting our water resources at these power plants."

SJC: State Authorities May Regulate Water Intake At Nuclear Plants (BOSH)

Boston Herald, April 12, 2011

SJC: State authorities may regulate water intake at nuclear plants

Environmental authorities, arguing that water intake systems used by nuclear facilities kill "billions" of aquatic organisms each year, scored a victory Monday in Massachusetts's highest court.

The Supreme Judicial Court, in a ruling authored by now-retired Justice Judith Cowin, said the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to regulate water intake, rejecting an argument by Entergy Nuclear Generation Co. that the agency overstepped its authority.

Entergy, which operates Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station and draws water from Cape Cod Bay, had argued that DEP may only regulate nuclear “discharge” and other traditional forms of pollution, but that water intake was off limits. Entergy also claimed federal regulators pressured the state to regulate water intake.

“The emphasis on traditional threats to water resources cannot be read to deprive the department of authority to address atypical or novel threats that may also harm those resources,” Cowin wrote in the unanimous ruling. “The department’s authority to create a discharge and pollution reduction program does not limit its authority to deal with water quality issues other than discharges and traditional pollution under its broad statutory powers. Restricting the department’s authority to water pollution control, as Entergy suggests, would render superfluous the department’s parallel duty to protect ‘the quality and value of water resources.’”

“We conclude that the language of [state law] does not support, nor did the Legislature intend, such a narrow view of the department’s authority,” she continued.

The ruling overturned a Suffolk Superior Court ruling in Entergy’s favor.

At issue is a December 2006 regulation issued by the department declaring its authority to set standards for the intake systems used by nuclear plants to cool their reactors. The regulation emerged after years of urging by the US Environmental Protection Agency to expand DEP’s authority beyond water discharge and more traditional forms of pollution, according to DEP’s filings in the suit.

Officials for Entergy declined immediate comment on the ruling.

“We have received the decision and our attorneys are studying it,” said Jack Alexander, Entergy’s manager of government relations.

According to the ruling, Entergy purchased the Pilgrim plant in 1999. The facility includes a “cooling water intake system” that draws water from Cape Cod Bay and discharges heated water and other pollutants. The facility holds a “discharge permit” issued by the EPA and state environmental authorities.

Nuclear issues burst into public consciousness last month after an earthquake and tsunami in Japan disrupted a cluster of reactors, releasing radioactive material into the air and water. Last week, Gov. Deval Patrick and legislative leaders urged the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to halt any steps toward relicensing the Pilgrim plant until all of the lessons from the Japanese nuclear crisis have been learned.

In its lawsuit, Entergy argued that DEP’s decision to regulate water intake systems represented a “reversal” in policy and lacked the explicit backing of Massachusetts law.

“Indeed, in the thirty-plus years that MassDEP has administered [water quality laws], it consistently maintained, until 2006, that it lacked statutory authority to regulate withdrawal,” Entergy attorneys argued in a brief submitted to the SJC. “Only after concerted pressure by EPA did MassDEP change its long-held position, though offering no explanation for the change. That administrative capitulation is not entitled to judicial deference.”

Entergy argued that Massachusetts law lacked any specific reference to intake by nuclear cooling systems and that the EPA already regulated nuclear cooling systems.

“Therefore, notwithstanding any aspirational goals of the State Act or whatever force may be derived from its apologetic, policy-based arguments, MassDEP cannot evade the fundamental hurdle that it may not take any action unauthorized by statute,” according to the brief, signed by three attorneys from Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, a Boston-based firm representing the company.

But the SJC argued that in areas like Cape Cod Bay, “with a designated use as aquatic habitat,” nuclear cooling facilities “hinder the attainment of water quality standards.”

“Accordingly, authority to regulate [cooling facilities] reasonably may be implied as necessary to protect water quality in the Commonwealth,” Cowin wrote.

In February, the EPA issued a new permit for a power plant in Cambridge, ending longstanding litigation and requiring the facility to reduce its heat discharge and water withdrawal levels by 95 percent, a mandate that environmental regulators said would address “adverse impacts” on fish populations in the lower Charles River and Boston Harbor. The water discharge permit for the 256-megawatt Kendall Cogeneration Station plant requires the plant’s owner GenOn, formerly Mirant, to closely monitor river temperatures to make sure its discharges into the river do not cause excessive warming of the waters.

According to the EPA, Kendall Station’s cooling system withdraws an average of 70 million gallons a day from the Charles River and discharges it back into the river at temperatures increased by 20 degrees, up to a maximum discharge temperature of

105 degrees. Under a modified permit, station owners will be required to make facility upgrades that, in combination with a new steam pipeline to be built across the Longfellow Bridge in the next few years, will enable the plant to sell up to twice as much steam into Boston as is currently possible, resulting in a reduction in the station's heat discharge and cooling water withdrawals of about 95 percent. The modified permit requires Kendall Station to install and operate a back pressure steam turbine and an air-cooled condenser that will enable the plant to reduce its water flow to 3.2 million gallons a day, according to the EPA.

"Although the [SJC] seems to have rejected in silence a host of unsound statutory arguments that DEP made in support of its position, I was disappointed that the Court accepted DEP's argument that general statutory language permits it to control water intakes, despite the fact that the focus of the statutes clearly is elsewhere," said John Pagliaro, an attorney with the New England Law Foundation, which submitted a brief in support of Entergy. Article URL: <http://www.bostonherald.com/news/politics/view.bg?articleid=1329954> NRC defends Peach Bottom accident response, despite analyst's concern

</news/national/northeast/view.bg?articleid=1329967> Governor names openly gay Barbara Lenk to SJC

</news/politics/view.bg?articleid=1328294> SJC upholds '06 Casali murder conviction

</news/regional/view.bg?articleid=1324110>

High Court Restores State Oversight At Pilgrim Nuclear Plant (ENTNEWS)

Enterprise News, April 12, 2011

Environmental authorities, arguing that water intake systems used by nuclear facilities kill "billions" of aquatic organisms each year, scored a victory Monday in Massachusetts's highest court.

The Supreme Judicial Court, in a ruling authored by now-retired Justice Judith Cowin, said the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to regulate water intake, rejecting an argument by Entergy Nuclear Generation Co. that the agency overstepped its authority.

Entergy, which operates Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station and draws water from Cape Cod Bay, had argued that DEP may only regulate nuclear "discharge" and other traditional forms of pollution, but that water intake was off limits. Entergy also claimed federal regulators pressured the state to regulate water intake.

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"We conclude that the language of [state law] does not support, nor did the Legislature intend, such a narrow view of the department's authority," she continued.

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“Although the [SJC] seems to have rejected in silence a host of unsound statutory arguments that DEP made in support of its position, I was disappointed that the Court accepted DEP’s argument that general statutory language permits it to control water intakes, despite the fact that the focus of the statutes clearly is elsewhere,” said John Pagliaro, an attorney with the New England Law Foundation, which submitted a brief in support of Entergy.

Court Decision Gives MA Power To Regulate Cooling Water Intake System At Nuclear Plant (WW)

Water World, April 12, 2011

Court decision gives MA power to regulate cooling water intake system at nuclear plant

BOSTON, MA, Apr. 11, 2011 – The Supreme Judicial Court in Massachusetts has ruled that environmental officials have the authority to regulate a cooling water intake system at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant...

4/11/2011 12:00:00 AM

BOSTON, MA, Apr. 11, 2011 – The Supreme Judicial Court in Massachusetts has ruled that environmental officials have the authority to regulate a cooling water intake system at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant.

The cooling system at the Pilgrim plant in Plymouth, MA, pulls in water from Cape Cod Bay. Heated water is later discharged through outflow pipes. The effluent is regulated by the state and federal governments.

Pilgrim owners, Entergy Corp., challenged whether the intake process is also within the state’s regulatory jurisdiction. This latest court decision reverses a lower court ruling that said the state Department of Environment lacked such authority.

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Millstone Leaders Reiterate Case Against Tax Bills (NOB)

Norwich (CT) Bulletin, April 12, 2011

Waterford, Conn. —

Millstone Nuclear Power Station executives publicly reiterated their case against two tax bills being considered by the General Assembly.

About 100 people attended a meeting at Waterford Town Hall Monday night which featured presentations by executives of Dominion Resources Inc., the Virginia-based company that owns the Waterford plant.

A \$335 million tax on the plant’s electricity output contained in Senate Bill 1176 would be a first nationally, said Daniel Weekley, Dominion’s vice president of governmental affairs.

"Once this production tax starts it will never stop," he said. "It will hit everyone of us."

Connecticut utility bills will skyrocket, he predicted. Connecticut already has the highest electricity rates in New England and the second highest nationally.

"The rate increases you will see will be unbelievable," Weekley said.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy is supporting an alternative – Senate Bill 1007 – which would double Millstone current overall tax bill from its current \$33.6 million per year. Dominion is against that bill, too, although it hasn't said Millstone will shut down if that bill is passed. It has said a shutdown will occur if Bill 1176 becomes law.

"Some have reported that we're threatening to shut down," Weekley said. "That's wrong. The state will be forcing us to shut down."

Skip Jordan, Millstone's site vice president, opened the forum by saying the meeting's objective was "to talk about jobs." Yet the company said nothing new about the fate of the 1,080 Dominion workers at Millstone. Another 350 workers work at the plant that are employed by other companies. Dominion has said it might have to lay off or furlough workers in the event of a shutdown.

The company is airing radio ads this week stating its opposition to the bill, saying 1,000 Connecticut jobs are "in jeopardy."

State Sen. Andrea Stillman, D-Waterford, and Rep. Elizabeth "Betsy" Ritter, D-Waterford, introduced Weekley and Jordan, with Stillman calling the event "an opportunity to hear from the experts." Both lawmakers expressed their pleasure at the size of the crowd, which included Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut President Tony Sheridan, Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region Corp. Executive Director John Markowicz, and Waterford First Selectman Dan Steward.

The meeting was interrupted by members of the Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone, asking questions about spent fuel in the plant's decommissioned Unit 1 and carrying signs critical of Millstone. After a few tense minutes and urging from the crowd, Dominion executives resumed taking questions from the audience.

Jordan's presentation centered on Millstone safety procedures and differences between the Connecticut plant and the Japanese facility that was crippled by an earthquake last month. Dominion is offering technical assistance and advice to Japanese engineers, he said.

Millstone Owners Stress Safety, Oppose New Tax Proposal (GREENWICH)

By Bill Cummings

Greenwich (CT) Time, April 12, 2011

WATERFORD – The operators of the Millstone Nuclear Power Station on Monday attempted to assure nervous residents that the disaster now unfolding at a nuclear facility in Japan cannot happen here.

They also tried to deflect a huge proposed tax on the plant that's now before legislators in Hartford struggling to balance the state budget.

"Every meeting at Millstone station starts with a message about safety. Our number one priority is to protect the health and safety of the public," said Skip Jordan, Millstone's site vice president, who has worked in the industry for 28 years.

An audience of approximately 150 gathered at Waterford Town Hall Monday evening to hear Millstone officials discuss safety and a proposed \$335 million state tax. Most appeared to be pro-Millstone, not surprising considering the plant provides or supports thousands of local jobs.

State Sen. Andrea Stillman, D-Waterford, and state Rep. Betsy Ritter, D-Waterford, hosted the meeting; they said they wanted to discuss safety issues and other concerns in the wake of the unfolding disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power facility. They also made it clear they oppose the proposed state tax on coal, oil and nuclear power generators.

Millstone officials have promised to close the plant if the tax becomes law, saying it would make the plant economically unfeasible.

Dan Weekley, vice president of government affairs for Millstone, said the plant already pays millions in taxes a year and purchases tens of millions of dollars worth of supplies. He said a recent state poll conducted by Dominion, Millstone's owner, found most state residents support nuclear power.

"No company could come along and pay those types of taxes. The state would be forcing us to shut down," Weekley said. "We as ratepayers will eat this increase."

Safety was also on the minds of some of those attending the meeting.

"Do you really believe this plant is safe," said one woman in the audience.

"I do," Jordan answered. "We are doing walk downs of initial designs and our emergency equipment to make sure we have what we need and are capable of performing in a severe accident."

"It includes a total loss of power and tornado, earthquakes and hurricanes. We have redundancy in each one of our systems, including back up generators and flood gates."

Nancy Burton, director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone, said, "There are differing points of view. Fukushima is an exploded reactor. It no longer exists. That event is still happening and it's still out of control."

But as Burton tried to make her point, the mostly pro-Millstone audience demanded she ask a question. They also shouted down another anti-nuclear activist who attempted to speak.

"Many people here derive income from Millstone. I don't. Why don't you move the spent fuel out of Millstone Unit 1?" Burton said.

Jordan said the fuel is safely stored in a spent fuel pool. Millstone has two operating reactors and a decommissioned one. It produces nearly half of the state's electricity.

"It's in a safe condition. It's a very low heat load and we are looking at moving that out of the pool," Jordan said. "That is not an immediate thing. It takes planning and approval and the company is looking at doing that."

"The people of Japan thought they were safe," said one woman, standing to make her point. "What are you going to say when you are proved wrong?"

"I have to differ with you. If I didn't believe that, I would not be here," Jordan said.

The Day - Big Crowd Packs Millstone Meeting Monday Night (NLDAY)

New London (CT) Day, April 12, 2011

Waterford

- Several members of a packed crowd sought assurance from executives giving a presentation about the Millstone Power Station Monday night that owner Dominion will put spent fuel from one shuttered reactor into safe dry storage on the site.

Skip Jordan, site vice president, and Dan Weekley, Dominion vice president of governmental affairs, spent an hour first discussing safety and a proposed tax on electric production at Millstone before fielding questions about the used fuel that sits in Unit 1, a boiling water reactor not unlike those at the badly damaged Fukushima Dai-ichi station in Japan.

Millstone's two operating reactors, which are pressurized water reactors, are safer, Jordan said, because they have primary and secondary cooling systems to keep the plants cool.

But Nancy Burton, a Mystic resident speaking on her own behalf and not in her role as director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone, wanted to know why Dominion isn't moving the spent fuel from Unit 1 immediately into an alternate type of storage known as dry cask storage.

John Markowicz, executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region and a Waterford resident, echoed her concern.

"What's the chance of the spent fuel being moved" if the bill to tax Millstone goes through, he asked.

Jordan said the company is evaluating moving that fuel so that it is no longer housed above the reactor, where it is more vulnerable, but he and Weekley noted that if the tax is approved it will make it more difficult to invest in safety improvements like that.

The meeting was still going on at 8:45 p.m. at Waterford Town Hall.

Residents Question Safety At Millstone (NLDAY)

New London (CT) Day, April 12, 2011

Waterford

- The owner of Millstone Power Station sought to reassure concerned residents Monday night that it is working to put potentially vulnerable spent fuel from one closed reactor into safe, dry storage on site.

A crowd of more than 150 people at Waterford Town Hall included an unidentified woman who said she wasn't convinced by Millstone owner Dominion executives' premise that the two operating Unit 2 and 3 reactors and the closed Unit 1 reactor could withstand a natural catastrophe like the earthquake and tsunami that wrecked still-troubled Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors in Japan.

And later, a former contractor with Dominion criticized company management for not protecting him when he reported an employee was abusing prescription drugs. The contractor said he was the unjustly fired, he said.

Skip Jordan, site vice president, and Dan Weekley, Dominion vice president of governmental affairs, spent an hour discussing safety and a proposed tax on electric production at Millstone before fielding questions in the Town Hall auditorium. The meeting was still going on late Monday night.

Jordan and Weekley started by discussing the used fuel that sits in Unit 1, a boiling water reactor not unlike those at the Fukushima station. Millstone's two operating reactors, which are pressurized water reactors, are safer, Jordan said, because they have primary and secondary cooling systems to keep the plants cool.

But Nancy Burton, a Mystic resident speaking on her own behalf and not in her role as director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone, wanted to know why Dominion isn't moving the spent fuel from Unit 1 immediately into an alternate type of storage known as dry cask storage. She lives outside the 10-mile radius that would be evacuated in event of a major calamity at Millstone, she said.

The crowd at times attacked her for trying to ask five questions instead of one, but John Markowicz, executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region and a Waterford resident, echoed her concern.

"What's the chance of the spent fuel being moved" if the bill to tax Millstone goes through, he asked.

A proposed state tax on nuclear electricity production would charge 2 cents a kilowatt hour to Dominion, or about \$335 million a year, Weekley said.

Jordan said the company is evaluating moving that fuel so that it is no longer housed above the reactor, where it is more vulnerable, but he and Weekley noted that if the tax is approved it will make it more difficult to invest in safety improvements like that.

State legislators including Sen. Andrea Stillman, Rep. Betsey Ritter and Rep. Ed Jutila said they and the entire delegation were opposed to the tax and fighting it.

The woman concerned for her family's safety in the event of a disaster by "Mother Nature," which is "damn good at creating catastrophes," wanted to know, "How do I protect my boys?"

Jordan said he has the same concern for his family and friends, many of whom live in nearby Groton, and his employees share those concerns also.

Steven Lavoie, the contractor and apparent whistleblower, said he was fired after reporting a co-worker's abuse of prescription medication.

"What is Dominion going to do about the liars in your company?" he asked. "There's corruption going on in upper management and all I was obligated to do was report it ... I've had a target on my back. I want to know what you people are going to do to restructure management because people are crooked."

Jordan said the company's practice is to go through "multiple channels ... (and) fully and thoroughly investigate that.

He told Lavoie his "commitment tonight is to go back and take another look at that."

One woman, Monica Rourke of Bristol, who said she was familiar with Millstone from when she worked in concrete repair in 2000, defended the nuclear complex as a well-run facility.

p.daddona@theday.com

NRC Denies License To UniStar For CC3 (SOMD)

Asks company to better address foreign ownership issue

By Meghan Russell

Southern Maryland Newspapers, April 12, 2011

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which oversees license approval for new nuclear reactors, released a report on Friday stating it could not issue UniStar Nuclear Energy a license for the proposed third reactor in Calvert County on the basis of foreign ownership.

According to NRC regulations, a foreign entity cannot own, control or dominate a US nuclear plant's operations for security reasons. UniStar submitted a combined license application and "negotiation action plan" in January in an attempt to address the issue, citing US individuals who would oversee the operations of Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant's third unit, since French company Electricite de France acquired Constellation Energy's 50 percent interest in UniStar, their joint US nuclear venture. The hierarchy of control and oversight was restructured in a way that UniStar hoped would negate EDF's dominant presence in the venture.

However, the NRC now rules that UniStar's plan is unsuitable for obtaining a license for CC3, on the grounds that: "1) UniStar is 100 percent owned by a foreign corporation (EDF), which is 85 percent owned by the French government; 2) EDF has the power to exercise foreign ownership, control, or domination over UniStar; and 3) the Negotiation Action Plan submitted by UniStar does not negate the foreign ownership, control or domination issues discussed above," the report states.

NRC staff will meet publicly with UniStar to discuss the results of its review if requested, the report continues. Also, while UniStar considers its next steps for proceeding with CC3, the NRC will continue to finalize the company's environmental impact

statement and will continue to review the remaining sections of the combined license application that do not involve the foreign ownership question. But a license cannot be issued, the report states, unless the outstanding requirements are met.

"As we have consistently stated, Calvert Cliffs 3 will ultimately have a US partner," a spokesperson for EDF said. "While EDF and UniStar disagree with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's conclusion regarding UniStar's present governance structure, we are pleased that the NRC will continue to review all other aspects of our pending application. This allows the project to continue moving forward as anticipated. UniStar and EDF will work with the NRC to resolve the governance issues prior to the issuance of the license."

Michael Mariotte, executive director of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, an environmental group, called CC3 "the first US nuclear casualty of the post-Fukushima era" in a press release, referring to the nuclear disaster caused by the earthquake and tsunami at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plant in March.

"The project already was on shaky ground with the withdrawal of Constellation Energy; it is impossible to imagine that Electricite de France will be able to find a new American partner to join in on a multi-billion dollar fiasco after the Fukushima nuclear disaster," he said in the release.

Mariotte also believes the ruling should end UniStar's chances of obtaining a Department of Energy loan guarantee for the project. "We would find it difficult to believe that the Energy Department could issue a loan guarantee for a project that is legally ineligible to obtain a construction license," Mariotte continued in the release, saying that if the DOE attempts to issue one anyway, "the matter would certainly be decided by the courts."

Calvert County Commissioners' President Susan Shaw (R), who has been among many local, state and federal leaders advocating for CC3, said she was not surprised by the NRC's ruling and believed UniStar has been actively searching for a US partner.

"We all knew that before they operated the plant they would have to have another owner," Shaw said. "All along we've believed they needed an American partner. This is supposed to be a prototype. ... My guess is they're going to have to find a partner sooner rather than later."

Shaw anticipates the construction of the third unit will create 5,000 temporary jobs and about 400 to 500 permanent positions, along with "millions of dollars" in tax revenue for the county. "Any way you look at it, it would be a huge boom," she said.

Contrary to Mariotte, Shaw said she hopes people will begin to see that the disaster that struck Japan last month could not occur at Calvert Cliffs because there is no shifting of the earth's plates in the region in which it is located. In addition, the troubled Japanese reactors were boiling water reactors, whereas the Calvert Cliffs units are pressurized water reactors, on top of other design differences that decrease the likelihood of a disaster at the US plant.

"I think a lot of that is becoming more clear and it will become even more clear as we learn more about what happened in Japan," she said. "... But I think as the price of oil continues to rise, the pressure will be on."

Shaw said she has heard the arguments regarding wind energy versus nuclear power, and she believes that while wind energy can provide peak power, it cannot always provide base generation power, or "power you count on for day-to-day needs" because "the wind does not blow all the time."

"Nuclear power is base load power," she said. "It's fairly reliable."

The irony of inventing more energy saving appliances, she added, is that there will be a greater need for electricity to power them. "Now we're going to have electric cars," she said. "Well where's that electricity supposed to come from?"

Once the events in Japan unfold, she said, more people may start to agree, "Nuclear is a way to go."

US House of Representatives Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md., 5th), another major supporter of CC3, also shared his views on the NRC's latest ruling and his desire to see the project continue.

"I have discussed with EDF their strong commitment to finding solutions to the challenges that confront the Calvert Cliffs 3 project," he said in a prepared statement. "I am very committed to the future of nuclear energy here in Maryland and am hopeful that EDF will find a US partner."

Neil Sheehan, spokesman for the NRC, said the agency will continue its review of the CC3 application. "For its part, UniStar will have to revisit its approach to satisfying our requirements on foreign ownership of US nuclear power plants," he said. "We will await word from the company as to how it plans to proceed."

NRC Will Not License French-owned Plant (WNN)

World Nuclear News, April 12, 2011

Unistar's application to build a new nuclear power plant at Calvert Cliffs does not currently meet federal laws on foreign ownership, the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has said.

Unistar Nuclear Energy, originally a 50:50 joint venture between EDF and Constellation Energy, is planning to build a French-designed EPR reactor at the Calvert Cliffs site in Maryland where Constellation already operates two existing pressurised water reactors. EDF took 100% control of Unistar Nuclear Energy when it bought out its erstwhile partner in October 2010 after the financial burden of securing federal loan guarantees put the project beyond Constellation's commercial reach.

US federal regulation 10 CFR 50.38 prohibits the granting of a nuclear plant operating licence to foreign corporations. Unistar has made various revisions to the ownership and financial information in its combined construction and operation licence (COL) application for the plant, including what it called a negation plan which would see the company appoint a US citizen as CEO to assure US control over relevant matters, and various subcommittees of US citizens to ensure US control over safety, security and reliability matters. However, in a letter to Unistar president and CEO George Vanderheyden dated 6 April, the NRC said that the application still failed to meet the requirements of 10 CFR 50.38.

The regulator has said it will continue its review of the remaining portions of the COL application and to finalize the final environmental impact statement "while Unistar considers its options to move forward," leaving the door open for the company to secure a US partner. "However, a licence will not be issued unless the requirements of 10 CFR 50.38 are met," the regulator warns.

NRC Challenges Calvert Cliffs Reactor Project Ownership But Continues License Process (NUCSTR)

Nuclear Street, April 12, 2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has deemed that the ownership of a proposed third reactor for Maryland's Calvert Cliffs nuclear plant is illegal under US law, but the agency indicated it will move forward with the reactor's licensing as French-owned UniStar seeks a US partner.

UniStar began the project as a joint venture between French firm EDF and US-based Constellation Energy Group. The latter backed out, though, last year over uncertainty regarding a federal loan guarantee for the project. UniStar indicated it would continue to look for a US-based partner, as federal law prohibits non-US companies from owning nuclear power plants.

In a letter Friday, the NRC notified the company that it will continue the licensing process for the project, but a final license would not be granted under the reactor's current ownership. A spokeswoman for UniStar told the Baltimore Sun that the project would move forward as anticipated and that it continues to seek a US partner.

A company proposal forwarded to the NRC in December would place two US citizens on its board and appoint only US citizens as chairman and CEO, but the NRC letter indicates that plan still does not bring the project's ownership within US law.

Proposed in 2007, the \$9.6 billion Calvert Cliffs unit 3 project calls for a new Areva-designed Evolutionary Power Reactor 40 miles south of Annapolis, Md.

FEMA To Test Emergency Preparedness At TMI (WHTM)

By Myles Snyder

WHTM-TV Harrisburg (PA), April 11, 2011

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will evaluate Three Mile Island's ability to respond to an emergency during a drill this week.

The week-long exercises are required by the federal government every two years.

FEMA specifically will evaluate the response of state and local emergency agencies within the 10-mile emergency-planning zone of the nuclear plant.

No sirens will be sounded during the drill.

Preliminary findings of the exercise will be presented during a public meeting Friday at 11:00 a.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn, at 3943 TecPort Drive, in Harrisburg.

Within 90 days, FEMA will send its evaluation to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for use in licensing decisions.

The final report will be available to the public in July.

Three Mile Island Drill (WTAJ)

By Kevin Flanigan

WTAJ-TV Altoona, PA, April 12, 2011

Middletown, Dauphin County - Emergency crews at and around Three Mile Island will be evaluated starting Monday.

FEMA will be looking at how prepared state and local responders are to protect public health and safety.

Preliminary findings of the emergency preparedness drills will be revealed on Friday.

Drills Being Held At Three Mile Island (WFMZ)

WFMZ-TV Allentown (PA), April 11, 2011

Officials will be at Three Mile Island this week to judge how well crews would respond to a nuclear accident.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will be monitoring drills at Three Mile Island.

The drills are held every two years.

They are meant to test the government ability to protect public health and safety.

FEMA will send its evaluation to the nuclear regulatory commission within 90 days.

FEMA will present its preliminary findings at a public meeting Friday morning.

Athens Seeking Grant For Evacuation Route (DECD)

By Holly Hollman

Decatur (AL) Daily, April 12, 2011

ATHENS — A multi-million project at Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant could help the city and county get a grant to improve one of the plant's evacuation routes.

The only westward route from the plant, which is Nuclear Plant Road, is a narrow county road without striping.

The estimated cost to pave and widen it is \$2.5 million.

On Monday, the Athens City Council approved spending up to \$250,000 from its general reserve fund toward the project, contingent on it receiving a \$2 million grant. The city is asking the Limestone County Commission to also approve spending up to \$250,000.

Public Works Director James Rich said the grant is through the Alabama Industrial Access Road and Bridge Corp. The city will make a grant request at the corporation's June meeting.

Part of the city's request will include the \$160,000,000 cooling tower project at the nuclear plant that requires changes to roads by the plant. The project is bringing 175 jobs to the city.

"Crews coming in stay at our hotels here," said Council President Jimmy Gill, "and they use that road to get to and from the plant."

Councilman Harold Wales said if the city does not get the grant, the city should de-annex property on Nuclear Plant Road. Gill disagreed, saying he wanted to keep his constituents.

AARP Defends Opposition To Nuclear Power Development Plan (CRG)

Cedar Rapids (IA) Gazette, April 12, 2011

An aerial view, looking southeast, of the 500-acre Duane Arnold Energy Center, located north of Palo, Iowa and northwest of Cedar Rapids. It is Iowa's only nuclear power plant.

AARP is firing back in a war of words over legislation it says would stick Iowans with the cost of developing future nuclear power generation even if the plants are never built.

At a Statehouse press conference Monday, AARP said it doesn't oppose the development of new power generation, including MidAmerican Energy's proposed nuclear plant, but objects to a pair of bills that would change the rules at the expense of Iowans, including its 370,000 50-and-older Iowa members.

AARP has been warning of "unnecessary and unknown" rate hikes that could hit ratepayers if Senate File 390 or House File 561 is passed into law.

The bills would help address hurdles MidAmerican might encounter in exploring the development of a 540-megawatt nuclear-powered facility costing \$1 billion to \$2 billion employing new technology that consists of a cluster of small modular reactors rather than the more typical large-scale nuclear power plants.

Rather than rely on shareholders and investors to finance a new power plant, Bruce Koeppel AARP state director, said the proposed legislation "shifts the billion-dollar plus costs to ratepayers for a possible nuclear plant, years before the plant is built, or the plant design has even been approved."

Koeppel said he was responding to questions lawmakers raised about an AARP advertising campaign urging people to tell legislators to "protect Iowans from unfair utility rater hikes."

Senate Commerce Committee Chairwoman Swati Dandekar, D-Marion, called the ads "deliberately misleading." in an op-ed piece that appeared in some Iowa newspapers "misleading."

"This state legislation is needed to continue consideration of nuclear power as a viable option for the state's future energy mix," Dandekar said.

She rejected AARP's argument that the legislation will increase utility costs.

"Not true. Nothing in this legislation increases electric rates or authorizes the construction of a nuclear facility," she said. "The legislation also does not alter the traditional role and responsibility of the Iowa Utilities Board or Consumer Advocate in deciding such matters."

Koeppel disputed that. AARP opposes the legislation because of "the lack of consumer protection – no comparison of alternatives, no cap on how much rates can increase no cost protection from cost overruns and no protection if the proposed plant is cancelled."

Those factors, "coupled with the unknowns about when, where and how much it will cost to build the new plant, demonstrates the need for Iowa lawmakers to study how to best increase the state's electric power generation," he said.

Dandekar insisted the proposed legislation includes a number of consumer protection measures, such as annual reporting and stringent accountability.

"The Iowa Utilities Board and the Office of Consumer Advocate always will keep Iowa's interests and economy at the forefront," she said. "Iowa needs to keep nuclear power in the mix in order to keep control of our electricity prices and continue to advance our economy."

Without taking a side, Gov. Terry Branstad said Monday that it's the Iowa Utilities Board's responsibility to answer many of those questions. When he appointed former Republican Rep. Libby Jacobs to chair the board it was with the understanding the board "would have the staff and wherewithal to protect the interests of the ratepayers and the state of Iowa."

At the same time, Branstad said, the state has to plan ahead to meet future energy needs.

"As we work to revitalize our economy, to bring jobs here, we want to make sure we have affordable and economical power available for our citizens and we want to do it in a way that environmentally safe as well," he said.

AARP Says Ad Opposing Nuclear Plan Is Accurate (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) - The senior advocacy group AARP is responding to criticism of an advertisement by the organization that argues a bill backed by utilities could cause rate increases.

AARP senior state director Bruce Koeppel argued at a news conference Monday that newspaper ads paid for by the group are accurate. The ads claim residents and businesses would pay more if the Legislature approves a bill backed by MidAmerican Energy that would let the utility charge customers in advance for the construction of a nuclear power plant.

Democratic Sen. Swati Dandekar of Marion and others have called the ad misleading.

AARP has more than 370,000 members in Iowa, and many of them have asked legislators to oppose the measure.

The bill has been approved by committees in both the House and Senate.

AARP Speaks Out Against Nuclear Plant Bill (RADIA)

By Dar Danielson

Radio Iowa, April 12, 2011

A war of words continues at the statehouse between backers of proposed new nuclear power plants and a lobbying group which opposes it. An ad by the A.A.R.P. urges defeat of bill, saying it would force utility rates up. State Senator Swati Dandekar, a Democrat from Marion, says the A.A.R.P. ad misleadingly as it refers to higher electric rates from a large nuclear power plant in Florida.

A.A.R.P. state director Bruce Koeppel does admit the Iowa proposal involves much less expensive smaller plants. "However, the bill does not limit the plant build to that smaller technology," Koeppel says. Dandekar says the bill preserves the Consumer Advocates traditional role in rate hike requests, and nothing in the bill will raise rates or even authorize a new nuclear plant.

But Koeppel says the legislation breaks new ground by letting MidAmerican Energy raise rates ahead of plant construction. "This proposal allows utility companies to force customers to continue paying accumulated costs to the utility even if the plant is cancelled," Koeppel said. Statehouse switchboard operators report numerous calls from A.A.R.P. members to their lawmakers urging defeat of the bill.

Koeppel estimates that A.A.R.P. members have made thousands of calls to lawmakers opposing the legislation, and the organization is spending thousands on its ads. Governor Terry Branstad said today he's confident state regulators would have the ability to monitor the situation and protect rate-payers.

AARP Calls Iowa Nuclear Plant Bill "bad Public Policy" (DMR)

By William Petroski

Des Moines Register, April 12, 2011

A state organization representing 378,000 older Iowans said today that thousands of its members have been contacting Iowa legislators to oppose bills that would help MidAmerican Energy construct a new nuclear electricity plant in Iowa.

"We oppose Senate File 390 and House File 961 because those bills substantially shift the cost and risk for nuclear power construction to ratepayers," said Bruce Koepl, AARP's state director. "Rather than rely on shareholders to finance a new power plant, this legislation shifts the billion-dollar-plus costs to ratepayers for a possible nuclear power plant, years before the plant is built, or the plant design has even been approved."

Koepl spoke to a reporters at an Iowa Statehouse news conference, remarking, "This is a bad bill, bad public policy." He distributed a letter from Florida State Sen. Mike Fasano, dated Feb. 17, 2011, to North Carolina Gov. Bev Perdue. Fasano, a Republican who describes himself as pro-business, told Perdue he regretted his support for a 2006 bill approved by the Florida Legislature which allowed utilities to charge ratepayers for new power plant construction costs before a plant is put in service.

Fasano wrote: "I believe that it is inherently unfair for utilities to ask their customers, our constituents, to front the costs of massive and expensive construction projects that are not even guaranteed to be completed. These risky investments ought to be the responsibility of utility shareholders and their investment partners, not the average ratepayer that is already struggling to pay their monthly utility bill or keep their business afloat."

AARP officials said the House version could be debated as soon as Tuesday on the House floor, while the Senate version could come up next week on the Senate floor. Both bills have already cleared House and Senate committees.

Koepl said the lack of consumer protections in the bills – no comparison of alternatives, no cap on how much rates can increase, no cost protection from cost overruns, and no protection if the proposed plant is cancelled, demonstrate the need for Iowa legislators to study how to best increase the state's electrical power generation.

William Fehrman, MidAmerican Energy's president, recently told legislators the company "certainly respects and appreciates" concerns about increased customer costs. But he added, "Costs are going to go up. That is just a fact of life." Consumers and legislators should also be aware that coal-fired power plants will be negatively affected in the future by "very strong and onerous regulations" linked to environmental issues, he said.

AARP has drafted an amendment to the proposed Iowa House bill aimed at developing an "informed plan" for expanding electrical generation in Iowa and is sharing it today with House members.

The pending Iowa bills would allow MidAmerican and its partners to recover "all prudent costs" associated with obtaining permits and licenses and to construct a proposed 540-megawatt plant to be located at an unspecified Iowa site. MidAmerican expects its share of the project's costs would be \$1 billion to \$2 billion, and partners would also contribute toward construction.

MidAmerican officials have said customers would see their electric bills rise 10 percent over a decade to pay for the investor-owned utility's share of the proposed plant. That doesn't include any other rate increases the company might seek to cover costs not related to plant construction.

Gov. Terry Branstad today indicated that he supports exploring further nuclear options in Iowa. He noted that the ultimate authority will go to the Iowa Utilities Board, which provides regulation for the state.

"I think there's a critical need for us to look at how we can in the future meet the additional energy needs in the state of Iowa," Branstad said. "And I think we should be open to considering things like clean coal and nuclear as well as natural gas and wind and the other sources that we have."

Vt. Gov Has Plan For 55-cent Charge (AP)

By Dave Gram

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — Vermont Gov. Pete Shumlin on Monday unveiled his plan to pay for promoting renewable energy development without relying on a surcharge to customers.

The governor said he wants to use money in the Clean Energy Development Fund to pay for the up-front grants, rather than tax credits.

Twenty-three Vermont renewable energy developers got a total of about \$8.5 million in tax credits to be taken over five years. Now, Shumlin said he wants to give them an option: the tax credit or half as much money in the form of an up-front cash payment when their project is up and running.

The governor and Administration Secretary Jeb Spaulding said they expected enough developers would take the up-front cash to save the fund between \$2.7 million and \$3 million. That's more than the \$2.38 million that would have been raised by a proposed 55-cent electric bill surcharge.

Shumlin said the fund would have sufficient cash "without raising 55 cents a month on Vermonters' electric bills at a time when Vermonters are hard-pressed to pay their bills and afford \$4-a-gallon gas."

Leigh Seddon, vice president of Alteris Renewables, a solar energy developer that has been working on a project in the southwestern Vermont of Pownal, said his company and its financing partners had welcomed the chance to take payment up front, even if smaller, rather than the tax credit over five years.

"When this proposal came to us from the administration, would you accept \$450,000 instead of the \$900,000 tax credit so you could get it this year when you want to build the plant, not over five years, the investment people ... said that works for us, financially. That works for us to have the cash up front and the certainty, and we will go along with it," Seddon said.

The scramble to find the right source of money comes as what has been the Clean Energy Development Fund's main funding source, the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant, is slated to close down next March. Shumlin and lawmakers had been looking for a one-year bridge to get from that funding source to a new one.

The governor said Monday he still hoped to get money for the fund from Vermont Yankee's owner, New Orleans-based Entergy Corp. Shumlin said he wants lawmakers to pass a new tax on spent nuclear fuel being stored in the state.

Vermont Yankee's spent fuel storage pool is nearly full and the plant has begun storing some of its spent fuel in concrete cask outside its reactor building in Vernon. Like other nuclear plants around the country, Vermont Yankee has been hard-pressed to find a place to send its highly radioactive waste. The federal government, so far, has not fulfilled a promise, made in a law passed by Congress two decades ago, to take the waste from reactors to a national disposal site.

The electric bill surcharge would have amounted to \$6.60 per year and became a hotly debated issue in the Legislature last week. Some lawmakers argued it would be an extra cost ratepayers don't need; others said it would be regressive, since both rich and poor ratepayers would be charged the same amount.

Shumlin told reporters on Monday the surcharge had been "not my idea," but Rep. Tony Klein, chairman of the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee, said it did come from the administration, in the person of now former Deputy Commissioner of Public Service Stephen Wark.

Told the governor was saying the idea didn't come from him, Klein scoffed.

"It didn't (come from Shumlin) but it came from his Department (of Public Service) and that's close enough for me," he said. "It came from the department and they work for him."

Shumlin Wants Energy Fund Redesign (WCAX)

By Jack Thurston

WCAX-TV, April 12, 2011

Vermont now has a little more than \$8.5 million in its Clean Energy Development Fund. That fund grants tax credits to builders of solar parks and other renewable energy projects. But since the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant pays into the program, and since Yankee is scheduled to close next year, the Shumlin administration had to come up with a way to keep the development money flowing.

"I really think it's a win-win," said businessman Leigh Seddon. Seddon is one of the developers behind Alteris Renewables. The group wants to build Vermont's largest solar park at the old racetrack in Pownal, on the Massachusetts border. The state is encouraging him with \$900,000 in tax credits over five years when the project's done. But Governor Peter Shumlin, D-Vermont, instead wants to give the project a one-time cash payment of \$450,000 upon completion. "That works for us," Seddon said.

Shumlin says switching the way the state handles its Clean Energy Development Fund will ensure money's in the pot to entice other projects to break ground. Right now, 23 different businesses are up for credits for nearly 100 projects. The governor calls instant pay-outs of half what companies would get over time a far better way to fund the program than a previous proposal in the House. Lawmakers had been considering tacking a 55-cent surcharge onto Vermonters' monthly electric bills.

"My challenge as governor is the simple fact that Vermonters on average are making the same money they were making 10 years ago, and their bills have gone up," Shumlin said.

But some Republicans question Shumlin's motivation. The Williston company AllEarth Renewables, which makes and designs wind and solar systems, suggested the governor look at the idea. The head of that company was a big donor to Shumlin's campaign and his firm would get fast cash instead of long-term tax credits if the proposal goes through.

"We, up until last week, had no mention of any of this stuff," Turner said. "So having a new proposal within three days of the previous proposal is quite concerning to us."

"It's an example of government being smart," Shumlin insisted.

Shumlin says the idea first went through the public service and tax departments, and was floated to many of the companies taking advantage of the fund, not just AllEarth. Plus, the idea isn't really new: the Shumlin plan is a modified version of the way the federal government handles incentives. That system is already established law.

Some may wonder why developers would take money at 50-cents on the dollar of what they were promised as tax credits. The company that wants to put the solar park in Pownal says it's still very hard to get funding in this economy, so it thinks investors will be more likely to sign off if they know they'll get fast cash returns instead of long-term credits.

Again, the cash payments would not go to developers until their projects are complete. And nothing here's final, either. The change to the way the fund is administered still needs approval from Vermont lawmakers. Republican leader Don Turner says this is just one of the many headaches that will come when Vermont Yankee closes.

Peace Walk Extends From Indian Point To Vermont Yankee (MIDHUD)

Mid-Hudson News, April 12, 2011

BUCHANAN – Some two dozen people started their Peace Walk in Croton Sunday, stopped to pray outside the Indian Point nuclear power plant in Buchanan, before they set out for the 206-mile walk to the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant.

Japanese Buddhist nun Jun Yasuda of the Grafton Peace Pagoda in Petersburg, NY, led the walk.

"People have been suffering from the earthquake; so many people died by the earthquake and also so many people are suffering under the nuclear situations," she said.

Among those joining the walk was Gerry Katzpen of Putnam Valley.

"While it would be wonderful to think that nuclear energy can provide clean energy, carbon free energy, it seems sometimes that the risk may not be worth that benefit because should be a mishap, it endangers millions of lives for a very long term," he said.

Sr. Yasuda said the long walk was meant as a meditation for a nuclear free future world.

Debates rage over the future of both Indian Point and Vermont Yankee.

Licenses for the two Indian Point reactors are up in 2013 and 2015, respectively. Entergy, which owns Indian Point, is seeking 20-year renewals for both reactors. Gov. Andrew Cuomo wants the plant closed.

Vermont Yankee is scheduled to shut down in 2012, but the owners are trying to keep it open, an effort opposed by the state attorney general.

Riverkeeper Warns Lawmakers Of Risks At Indian Point (WESTJN)

By Jorge Fitz-Gibbon

Westchester Journal News, April 12, 2011

WHITE PLAINS — It wouldn't take a tsunami to dangerously damage the Indian Point nuclear reactors, an environmentalist group told Westchester County legislators on Monday.

Speaking one month after an earthquake and tsunami set off a crisis at Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant, Hudson Riverkeeper Paul Gallay also told a county board committee that radioactive spent fuel pools at the Buchanan reactors are Indian Point's "Achilles' heel."

"All of these issues do not require a tsunami, which is one of the things that Indian Point says, and says that we should be easy in our minds because we won't have a tsunami," Gallay said. "Well, if this plant is not equipped to handle an earthquake without a tsunami, we could be in the situation we find ourselves in in Japan."

"There are issues associated with the age of the plant that have to do with corrosion of piping, that have to do with metal fatigue in the containment dome, that have to do with embrittlement of the containment dome," he said.

The public meeting, held at the Michaelian Westchester County Office Building in White Plains, is the last in a series held by Legislator Michael Kaplowitz, D-Somers, and Legislator Martin Rogowsky, D-Harrison.

Kaplowitz chairs the board's Committee on Environment and Energy ; Rogowsky chairs the Public Safety and Security Committee.

"Whether Indian Point is open or closed, we're going to need an evacuation plan because of the spent fuel that is at Indian Point," Kaplowitz said Monday.

"So we're going to deal with this issue for as much as 10,000 years, the scientists tell us," he said. "And certainly dry cask as much as 100 years in the current format, and the spent fuel as it currently exists for some period of time."

Kaplowitz said the continuing nuclear crisis at Japan's Fukushima plant warrants close scrutiny of Indian Point, which sits near an earthquake fault.

Federal and state officials have also made nuclear safety a priority, prompting the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to assure that Indian Point will top the list when the agency conducts more thorough seismic assessments of the nation's nuclear plants.

NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan said the agency was quick to react after the Fukushima incident, and is finalizing a stringent assessment of the plants. He said the agency has strict standards for earthquake resistance.

"We are hardly ignoring the lessons learned that came out of the Japan reactor events. We intend to look at them aggressively and make changes at US reactors wherever appropriate," Sheehan said. "We are not sitting back and remaining indifferent to the earthquake risks faced by Indian Point or any other plants."

Jerry Nappi, a spokesman for Entergy Nuclear Northeast, which owns Indian Point, added that plant officials "take the storage of used fuel very seriously and we store it through two very safe methods."

Nappi said Entergy also questioned legislators' motive for the county meetings.

"Legislator Kaplowitz has moved past addressing the understandable concerns people have following the earthquake and tsunami in Japan and on to his self-serving agenda to close Indian Point," Nappi said.

But Gallay and Phil Musegaas, Riverkeeper's Hudson River program director, contend that the plants' age — including underground pipes that carry cooling water and power lines required to operate backup systems, should be a concern at Indian Point.

Of particular concern, they said, is that the NRC does not evaluate evacuation plans, seismic resistance and the spent fuel pools when it re-licenses nuclear plants — something the agency is currently considering for Indian Point.

"What this process needs," Gallay said, "this relicensing process, the process of evaluating the safety of the nuclear power stations in the United States and Indian Point in particular — it requires independent, expert analysis prior to any decision whether to re-license the Indian Point power plants."

Entergy, Riverkeeper Officials Invited To Brief Lawmakers On Indian Point Safety; Watch At 3 P.m. (WESTJN)

By Jorge Fitz-Gibbon

Westchester Journal News, April 12, 2011

WHITE PLAINS — The Westchester County Board of Legislators will hold its latest in a series of public meetings on the Indian Point nuclear power plants today at 3 p.m., seeking to shed light on safety issues at the Buchanan plant in the wake of the crisis facing Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant.

Watch the session live online at 3 p.m.

The county board's committees on environment and energy, and public safety and security, which have hosted the meetings, said they have invited officials from the environmental group Riverkeeper as well as officials from Entergy Northeast, which owns the Indian Point reactors. The board said in a press release that Entergy officials had not notified the committees if they would be able to attend.

County Legislators Michael Kaplowitz, D-Somers, and Martin Rogowsky, D-Harrison, who chair the two committees, said they began holding the public meetings to ensure that residents have complete information about Indian Point.

Federal and state officials, including Gov. Andrew Cuomo, have focused on the safety of the plant after the Japanese reactor was damaged during an earthquake and tsunami last month. Riverkeeper, a frequent critic of the Indian Point plant, has been among those raising concerns. The Buchanan plant lies close to an earthquake fault.

Entergy is awaiting word from federal officials on its application to extend the plant's operating license, a move opposed by Riverkeeper, among others.

Last week the Westchester County board announced legislation extending the federal evacuation zone around Indian Point from 10 miles to 50 miles in the wake of the Japanese nuclear crisis.

Today's meeting will be held at 3 p.m. on the eighth floor of the county office building at 148 Martine Ave., on the corner of Court Street in White Plains. The meeting is open to the public.

US Nuclear Output Falls As Units Shut In New Jersey, Nebraska (BLOOM)

By Colin McClelland

Bloomberg News, April 12, 2011

US nuclear-power output fell 0.4 percent as reactors shut in New Jersey and Nebraska, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said.

Power generation nationwide decreased 322 megawatts from April 8 to 75,969 megawatts, or 75 percent of capacity, according to an NRC report today and data compiled by Bloomberg. Twenty-four of the nation's 104 reactors were offline.

Public Service Enterprise Group Inc. (PEG) shut the 1,130- megawatt Salem 2 reactor located about 18 miles (29 kilometers) south of Wilmington, Delaware. It was operating at 95 percent of capacity on April 8. Another unit at the site, the 1,174- megawatt Salem 1, is operating at full power.

Omaha Public Power District idled the 482-megawatt Fort Calhoun reactor located on the Missouri River, 19 miles north of Omaha. It was operating at full capacity on April 8, the commission said.

Southern Co. (SO) slowed the 860-megawatt Farley 2 reactor in Alabama to 56 percent of capacity from 100 percent on April 8. Another unit at the site, the 851-megawatt Farley 1, is operating at full power. The plant is located about 18 miles east of Dothan.

FirstEnergy Corp. (FE) started the 940-megawatt Beaver Valley 2 reactor in Shippingport, Pennsylvania. It is operating at 25 percent of capacity.

While the unit was at 15 percent of capacity on April 9, the "A" auxiliary feedwater injection header was declared inoperable due to a water leak and the reactor was put in hot standby mode, meaning it was at operating pressure and temperature, the NRC said.

At about 4 a.m. local time yesterday, the unit was manually tripped offline because of a build-up of steam in one of its generators, the federal agency said.

The plant is located about 26 miles northwest of Pittsburgh. Another 940-megawatt unit at the site, Beaver Valley 1, is operating at 82 percent of capacity.

Entergy Corp. (ETR) started the 1,025-megawatt Indian Point 3 located on the Hudson River about 27 miles north of New York City. It is operating at 86 percent of capacity. The 1,020- megawatt Indian Point 2 reactor is operating at full capacity. Unit 1 was shut in 1974.

The Tennessee Valley Authority boosted output from the 1,104-megawatt Browns Ferry 2 reactor in Alabama to 68 percent of capacity from 19 percent on April 8.

Browns Ferry Units 1 and 3, which have respective capacities of 1,065 megawatts and 1,115 megawatts, are operating at full power. The plant is located 84 miles north of Birmingham on Wheeler Lake, near the Tennessee border.

FirstEnergy slowed the 893-megawatt Davis-Besse reactor to 91 percent of capacity from 100 percent on April 8. The unit is located on Lake Erie 21 miles east of Toledo, Ohio.

Some reactors close for maintenance and refueling during the spring and fall in the US, when demand for heating and cooling is lower. The outages can increase consumption of natural gas and coal to generate electricity.

The average US reactor refueling outage lasted 41 days in 2009, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute.

Shimkus Says Yucca Mountain Trip A Go Despite Cost Warnings (SLPD)

By Bill Lambrecht

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, April 12, 2011

WASHINGTON – Even before the nuclear disaster in Japan, US nuclear operators and their allies in Congress were demanding that the Obama administration rethink its decision to put Yucca Mountain off limits to high-level reactor waste.

Two weeks ago, Rep. John Shimkus, R-Collinsville, who heads an Energy subcommittee dealing with atomic wastes, announced that the Energy Committee will investigate the decision.

And that meant Shimkus and other members would be traveling to Nevada this month to view Yucca Mountain for themselves, Shimkus said.

Fact-finding trips by Washington politicians are common, but this one is proving to be anything but.

On Friday, Rep. Henry Waxman, of California, urged Shimkus to cancel the trip, declaring that it would cost \$200,000, including the cost of helicopters to transport members from Las Vegas.

Citing an Energy Department letter, Waxman, the ranking Democrat on Shimkus's subcommittee, said the trip could turn into a big waste if unsafe levels of dangerous gas keep members from entering Yucca's storage tunnel.

The letter went on to say that "the environment within the tunnel will not be comfortable. There will be a lot of airborne dust and visitors will likely have to wear respirator masks...When riding in the 'mules', the entire group will not be able to hear well."

Waxman, hours before a budget deal averted a curtailment of government services, wrote: "At a time when the government is facing a shutdown over funding, it seems completely inappropriate to incur these needless expenses."

Shimkus said he is undeterred – and "appalled" at the suggestion that the delegation would be wasting money. "We spent \$14 billion or \$15 billion to prepare this site for long-term storage. What are they trying to hide?" he asked in an interview.

The Energy Department is distorting the cost, Shimkus contended. The delegation is willing to ride a bus to the site and doesn't need helicopters, he said. Nor is it a must that they see inside the mountain, meaning that expensive safety tests and other preparation is unnecessary.

"What I think has happened is that they have illegally closed Yucca Mountain," Shimkus asserted.

Nearly 30 years ago, Congress declared that the nation should have a single repository for the dangerous spent fuel from reactor cores. Five years later, Yucca Mountain, a volcanic ridge northwest of Las Vegas, was selected.

Since then, a combination of safety questions and political opposition has left the massive project on life-support. The Obama administration announced last year that it was committing no more money to Yucca Mountain and looking elsewhere for a location to permanently house some 60,000 tons of intensely hot material.

As part of its investigation, the House Energy Committee is demanding that the Energy Department and Nuclear Regulatory Commission provide documents and details about the Yucca decisions.

Shimkus said he had hoped that as many as a dozen House members, including Democrats, would be making the trip during a congressional recess at month's month. He worries now that the lack of cooperation might dissuade some colleagues from the travel.

"We think they're slow-stepping us to create a smaller group," Shimkus said. "There are just a lot of weird things going on."

After reading this blog post, Rep. Shelley Berkley, a Democrat who represents the Nevada area, remarked that perhaps the Energy Committee members "think there is an extra \$100 billion laying around inside Yucca Mountain to pay for their plan to turn Nevada into a radioactive graveyard."

She added in a statement: "Instead of parading around an empty hole in the Nevada desert for the cameras, why doesn't Congressman Shimkus call on the nuclear industry to quit putting profits over the safety of America's families and join me in demanding they secure waste in on-site dry-cask storage."

Shimkus observed that Energy Department officials told him no news media members would be permitted to cover the visit.

Lawmakers To Take Buses On Yucca Tour (LVSRJ)

By Steve Tetreault

Las Vegas Review-Journal, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from this source currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

US Needs Nuclear Waste Storage Site (HILL)

By Rep. John Shimkus

The Hill, April 12, 2011

The March 11 earthquake in Japan led to a tsunami that crippled the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. While a similar situation is not likely at any US nuclear plant, we must use this to look at our country's lack of a central storage facility for nuclear waste.

The first commercial nuclear power plant began operating in the United States in 1960. In 1982 the Nuclear Waste Policy Act made the federal government responsible for collecting nuclear waste.

In 1987, Yucca Mountain was named the sole site for a permanent repository of nuclear waste. The Department of Energy (DOE) confirmed the scientific side of this decision in 1994. In 2002, Congress and the President approved Yucca Mountain again. In 2008, DOE filed a license application with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to build Yucca Mountain.

Obviously, the decision to move forward with a national nuclear waste repository has been supported by Republican- and Democrat-controlled Congresses and Republican and Democrat presidents for all these years.

I have visited Yucca Mountain. It is located on federal property. The storage site would be 1,000 feet below ground in a remote desert location. Earthquakes have had little impact on this area and even less of an impact underground.

Today, we store nuclear waste at 121 sites in 39 states. Nuclear power provides over 20 percent of our nation's electricity. That number is closer to 50 percent in Illinois.

In Illinois, eight pools house spent nuclear fuel rods from the 13 nuclear power plants, 11 of which are still operating. Two pools are within 40 miles of downtown Chicago. Is that really where we want to store nuclear waste?

In testimony before the Senate on March 30, Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of physics Ernest Moniz called for these spent fuel rods to be stored in "dry" casks at regional government facilities. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) agreed.

While I agree with the government following its own law and taking control of nuclear waste, I question why we should throw away the \$14.5 billion already spent on Yucca Mountain. We don't need regional sites; we already have designated a consolidated government storage site!

Also on March 30, President Obama called for an increase in nuclear power as part of a clean energy standard. While I may not agree with a mandated standard, I know that nuclear power will continue to be vital in our nation's electricity portfolio.

Unfortunately President Obama and his administration have unilaterally halted work on Yucca Mountain. They would rather see nuclear waste stored all over the country instead in Nevada – home of Senate Majority Leader Reid.

I believe the administration is failing to carry out the current federal law. In order to find out exactly why the administration halted work on Yucca Mountain, under our oversight authority House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) and I are proceeding with an investigation. On March 31 we sent letters to the Secretary of Energy and to the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In addition, as part of our oversight and responsibility to rate payers and taxpayers, I will be leading a delegation of legislators to tour Yucca Mountain later this month.

Past Congresses and administrations have approved Yucca Mountain. And while it has taken too long to become reality, this administration cannot rewrite the law or pull already issued permits away from it.

Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.) is chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy.

Despite House GOP Push, Harry Reid Declares 'Yucca Is Dead' (LVS)

By Karoun Demirjian

Las Vegas Sun, April 12, 2011

In the final days, the budget compromise came down to a faceoff over policy riders, with funding for Planned Parenthood, National Public Radio and the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency taking center stage.

But it's one rider that fell off the table quietly that will likely resonate strongest for Nevada.

"Yucca Mountain is dead," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who was the chief negotiator for Democrats. "And I think it's time for opponents to move on."

Yucca Mountain, which hasn't received funding under any federal budget that's been passed since Obama came to office, came back on the agenda this past winter, when Republican House leaders included funding and a directive about the projected nuclear waste storage site in their budget bill, H.R. 1.

That bill, which passed the House but failed in the Senate, would have made it illegal to use federal funds to derail ongoing activities at Yucca, including the siting process, now mired in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's approvals process. Effectively, it would have kept the site open.

"H.R. 1's history, man," Reid said Monday when asked if he was at all concerned that it might still be funded.

Yucca Mountain's an emotional issue for many Nevadans, and one that members of the state delegation kept recalling, both as a matter of policy and politics, throughout the budget process.

Nevada Republican Rep. Dean Heller, who supported H.R. 1, tried to remove the Yucca rider from the bill by amendment before it passed. His attempt failed.

Nevada Democratic Rep. Shelley Berkley tried to paint the whole budget standoff in terms of the Yucca Mountain rider.

"Republicans say we have to make damaging budget cuts at the same time they are seeing these same Republicans push for \$100 billion in spending to turn Nevada into a nuclear waste dump," she said. "Nevadans reject Yucca Mountain ... and they are stunned that these same Republican lawmakers are willing to shut down the government over an amount that is less than half the cost of Yucca Mountain."

While Reid's efforts may have finally killed the Yucca rider in the budget process, enthusiasm for keeping the project alive doesn't seem to be waning in the House. Republican members of the House's Energy and Commerce Committee had been planning on taking an April recess vacation to view the site.

But because the site's been closed for two years, it would take some doing to ready it for inspection, and the extra effort is expected to run the government about \$175,000 – not to mention the cost of helicopters and lodging.

"To think that the House Republican members of the Energy and Commerce Committee are planning a trip to Yucca Mountain that will cost almost \$200,000 to get the tunnel ready so they can go look at it?" Reid said Monday. "The only thing that might be a good idea is if they all travel to Las Vegas and stay in one of our hotels, that's the only good part about it."

The proposed trip, spearheaded by Illinois' Rep. John Shimkus, has been canceled, in part because of spreading revelations that whatever they found, there's little chance that anything but a huge influx of political will and capital could get the project up and running again soon.

"The President of the United States opposed it. The Secretary of Energy opposed it," Reid said. "It has no money."

That last bit is key.

Yucca Mountain's potential funding lies in the Treasury's Nuclear Waste Fund, made up of annual fees charged to utility companies based on the amount of nuclear power plant-generated electricity they produce and sell. Money that comes in is considered mandatory spending, but money can only flow out as a result of a congressional authorization.

Thus, there's more coming in than going out – an imbalance that has grown the fund to nearly \$30 billion. Under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, the Treasury Department can reinvest whatever money goes unspent (which it mostly does) as "non-marketable Treasury securities." Because it's sitting there, the money is treated as part of the general Treasury funds on the books, a categorization that lets the Treasury count what's in waiting toward deficit reduction.

The money hasn't yet been liquidated: Congress rejected an effort led by Sens. Lindsey Graham and John McCain in 2009, shortly after Obama indicated his intention to see to it that the Yucca project remain on ice.

But the project has never received enough political backing to make dipping into Treasury funds feasible -- nor would it actually do much good until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Yucca evaluation is complete.

While the events at the Fukushima reactor in Japan have opened an intense season of discussion around nuclear energy, it doesn't seem like that's translating toward enthusiasm for re-opening Yucca so much as it is making lawmakers look toward safer ways of storing nuclear waste on site.

"Are we not in a world that has accepted reprocessing? Should we not be looking at ourselves as an alternative to a \$90 billion Yucca Mountain investment that might come online 10 years from now?" Sen. Dick Durbin asked a panel of the government's nuclear experts, including Nuclear Regulatory Commission chair Greg Jaczko and the acting assistant energy secretary Peter Lyons.

"The one thing that was proven to be safe [in Japan] was the spent fuel rods in the dry-cast storage," Reid said, stressing that carting off spent fuel rods to Nevada seemed a gratuitous step when safe storage procedures were available closer to plants themselves. "It's really not sensible for them to try to use this as an issue."

US Senate Majority Leader Reid Says Yucca Rider Removed From CR (PLATTS)

Platts, April 12, 2011

US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said Monday that a rider barring the Nuclear Regulatory Commission from completing the closeout of the Yucca Mountain repository project was knocked out of a stop-gap spending measure last week. "I've said it before and will say it again, Yucca Mountain is dead," Reid, Nevada's senior senator and the state's leading opponent of the Yucca Mountain project, told reporters during a teleconference. The rider to the continuing resolution that lawmakers approved late Friday to avert a government shutdown did not contain any funding. It would have, however, barred the NRC from spending any money to further close out any agency activities associated with the Yucca Mountain repository project. President Barack Obama's administration canceled the program, citing Nevada's opposition to the facility. By the time fiscal 2011 began October 1, both the Yucca Mountain project and the DOE office that oversaw it had been dismantled. NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko also had terminated NRC's licensing activities associated with the DOE's Yucca Mountain repository license application in October. --Elaine Hiruo, elaine_hiruo@platts.com

Analyst Questions Safety Of Spent Fuel Storage (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — The Tennessee Valley Authority stores spent fuel and fuel rods at its plants, just like other nuclear plant operators, but an industry analyst is questioning the safety of that storage.

TVA has more than 2,544 metric tons of radioactive spent fuel in cooling ponds at its Sequoyah and Watts Bar nuclear plants in Tennessee and Browns Ferry plant in Athens. That is far more than in the reactors themselves.

The Union of Concerned Scientists' Edwin Lyman said the amount of fuel from TVA's reactors represents about "100 reactor-years worth of discharges."

Nuclear industry analyst David Lochbaum told the Chattanooga Times Free Press that some storage pools are in buildings with sheet-metal siding.

TVA nuclear spokesman Ray Golden said the spent fuel pools at TVA's three nuclear plants are safe.

Murkowski: Smaller Steps On Energy (POLITCO)

By Darren Goode

Politico, April 12, 2011

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski thinks Congress will have more success taking a “graduated” approach to energy legislation while keeping up the pressure to respond to last year’s Gulf of Mexico spill.

While the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, in which Murkowski is the top Republican, approved separate strategies last Congress addressing the historic oil spill and broader energy problems, the full Senate and Congress more generally did not follow suit.

“So more of a graduated approach to an energy policy, and I happen to believe that we will have greater likelihood of success in advancing something like that through the committee and getting it through the floor of the Senate and the House as well,” Murkowski told POLITICO in the video series “Powering America’s Future.”

Murkowski cited legislation increasing hydropower and addressing small-modular nuclear reactors as examples. There is “probably much greater likelihood” of something like the latter bill moving “than a full-on expanded nuclear piece, particularly in view of just the uncertainty that we’re seeing after the earthquake in Japan.”

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) will start marking up energy measures Tuesday, with additional measures coming before Memorial Day.

In order to spur floor action in this Congress, Bingaman has said he hopes to pass everything out of committee by early summer, including legislation designed to ensure the Interior Department “has the authority and resources they need to maintain proper regulation of oil and gas drilling on the outer continental shelf,” he said at a March 30 POLITICO Pro event.

As the first anniversary of the April 20 explosion of the Deepwater Horizon rig that led to the biggest oil spill in history approaches, lawmakers also face a public both skittish on nuclear power after the damage to Japan’s Fukushima Daiichi reactor and frustrated by the rise of gas prices.

Some of the ideas Murkowski thinks the energy panel will take up may not sound like headline-grabbing proposals that would restore public confidence in how Capitol Hill is responding to their concerns.

“I wouldn’t suggest it’s kind of nibbling around the edges,” Murkowski said. “I would suggest to you that what we’re doing is being more focused in terms of those areas where we feel that we can reach consensus on some energy issues, work to utilize the committee process to build good, solid legislation in these areas, advance them through.”

She added, “It is a broader, more comprehensive” plan than just focusing on something like hydropower specifically. “But we haven’t gone about it in the same manner that we did in the last Congress. We took the ‘full-meal deal’ approach, and we weren’t able to sell it.”

The panel also wasn’t able to fully sell the strategy it passed last June to quickly respond to the Gulf spill, getting caught in the politics in the broader Senate on raising the per-spill liability limit for companies and cutting tax incentives for the oil industry.

At the time, “the explosion, the deaths, just the real tragedy that went on with that, the nation was fixated on what was happening in the Gulf of Mexico as we watched on our TVs, as we read about the efforts to plug that hole,” Murkowski said. “And then they find success and they plug the well and the cleanup continues, and no longer is this incident in the news. And then, it seems like the pressure is off of us here in the Congress to act legislatively.

“We shouldn’t allow the timing and the circumstances of what has happened down there to remove us from the responsibility of addressing the reforms that need to be made,” she added.

Last year’s failure of Congress to produce a spill-response bill showed “even if we were successful in building a bipartisan product, there’s no guarantee that it then becomes a priority,” she said, adding that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid should make it a priority as well. “It needs to be made a priority by the administration, to say we need to have these structural reforms.”

The Interior Department has started separating safety and environmental oversight from approval of offshore drilling leases and collection of royalty relief.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar “has done some things internally. But quite honestly, a lot of the fixes require a legislative fix,” Murkowski said.

One of those is largely out of the hands of Murkowski and the Senate energy panel.

Sens. Mary Landrieu (D-La.), Mark Begich (D-Alaska) and Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) are trying to find a compromise to raising the two-decade-old \$75 million-per-spill liability cap for companies.

Landrieu and Begich are meeting first to develop an idea that would need to pass muster with those like Menendez, who is one of the leading offshore drilling critics. “We’ve told our staffs to get back at it,” Begich told POLITICO. He met briefly with Landrieu to talk about it. “We both feel it’s time to re-engage.”

Murkowski said that's going to have to happen.

"One of the things that held us up ... was what happens with the liability issue and the cap," she said. "And so, maybe what you do [is] take people like Bob Menendez, who was leading on that issue, [Sen.] Frank Lautenberg [D-N.J.], and team them up with Mary Landrieu, myself, some of the others to make sure the commitment to fixing the systems is made while at the same time we can address the liability issue."

Meanwhile, Murkowski and Bingaman are also working on President Barack Obama's "clean energy standard," which promotes renewable power, nuclear sources and cleaner use of coal. She and Bingaman last month solicited public input on what a standard should entail. Responses are due Monday.

"There are those who suggested that a clean energy standard, in fact, may be nothing more than, you know, cap and trade under a different name," Murkowski said. "I don't think that that is the case, but if that is the case, then CES is not going to happen if that's how it is viewed. So ... we're looking to see just what is the temperature out there for an approach that would mandate a clean standard."

Higher MOX Fuel Concentration Weighed For US Reactors (GSN)

Global Security Newswire, April 12, 2011

The federal Tennessee Valley Authority and Energy Department have conducted talks on potentially substituting mixed-oxide fuel derived from nuclear-weapon material for one-third of the low-enriched uranium in several US power reactors, a substantially higher proportion of MOX fuel than a crippled Japanese nuclear plant had used, the New York Times reported on Sunday (see GSN, April 5).

Any TVA move on the proposal has been put off pending a review of the behavior of MOX fuel at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, which was severely damaged last month by a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and tsunami (see related GSN story, today). The federal investigation would address the extent to which the MOX fuel – which comprised 6 percent of the material in the Japanese facility's No. 3 reactor – has heated and broken down since the March disasters.

"We are studying the ongoing events in Japan very closely," TVA spokesman Ray Golden said.

The Mixed-Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility, a site under construction at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, would convert 34 metric tons of excess weapons plutonium to nuclear power plant fuel, according to an earlier report. The facility's expense has reached almost \$5 billion since the government signed a contract for its creation, and no entity has officially stepped forward to buy the fuel.

A nuclear regulatory board this month called for new testimony on measures to manage and protect the plutonium the facility would house, noting "significant public safety and national security issues" (see GSN, April 4).

Some experts contend MOX fuel poses a greater risk of dangerous incidents than other nuclear fuel, but the administration has defended the material's safety profile. Six countries other than Japan have authorized the fuel's regular use, said Anne Harrington, deputy administrator for the US National Nuclear Security Administration.

Opponents of the fuel have made "an opportunistic attempt" to damage the material's reputation following the Fukushima disaster, Harrington said. "MOX is nothing new," she added.

"Proliferation causes a far greater danger to a far greater number of people than highly controlled use of this fuel in a reactor," she said.

"MOX was not the cause of [the Japanese] accident, and the consequences of it have not been impacted by MOX," said David Jones, a vice president with the French atomic firm Areva, a primary participant in the US MOX plant's construction. No firm indicators have emerged of plutonium escaping from the Japanese facility, the Times reported.

The MOX facility's detractors, though, suggested the project faced a growing prospect of being thwarted and becoming what Union of Concerned Scientists senior staff scientist Edwin Lyman called "a plant to nowhere." Such a development would scuttle Washington's plan for disposing of excess US weapons plutonium capable of powering as many as 10,000 nuclear weapons or a larger number of radiological "dirty bombs," according to the Times. The material might also power 43 reactors for one year, the newspaper said.

Releases of the converted weapon material could pose greater health risks than other nuclear fuel types, Lyman concluded in a 2001 study. Energy Department officials have acknowledged but played down the potentially greater health threat posed by MOX fuel.

MOX opponents said Washington has lessened the South Carolina plant's nonproliferation benefit by loosening certain regulations for the protection of plutonium. The material might be stolen ahead of its conversion into material too dangerous for human handling, they said.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has required fewer protective measures for MOX fuel inside larger components on grounds that the material would be of less interest to extremists.

Shaw Areva MOX Services, which is constructing the South Carolina plant, submitted and then canceled a formal call for the government to waive plutonium management and tracking requirements. Despite the revocation, the Atomic Safety Licensing Board responded with a call for additional testimony on the MOX site's ability to safely handle and transfer plutonium.

"We continue to believe that the MOX project meets all the regulatory requirements for licensing, and we welcome the opportunity to present our case," the entity said in a statement.

"I'd defy anyone to walk in and walk out with any of our plutonium," Harrington added (Becker/Broad, New York Times, April 10).

Shaw Group, Babcock & Wilcox To Help Dismantle Damaged Japanese Plants (CLTBIZJ)

By John Downey

Charlotte (NC) Business Journal, April 12, 2011

Welcome to Power Weekend, catching up on stuff we've learned since Friday.

Babcock & Wilcox and the Shaw Power Group are working with Toshiba and Westinghouse on plans to dismantle the badly damaged nuclear reactors in northern Japan.

The New York Times reported last week Tokyo Electric Power Co., owner of the crippled Fukushima reactors, acknowledges the plants must be scrapped.

Toshiba, the lead company involved in the work, has assembled a team of experts from the other companies to help with the plans. Toshiba is the principal owners of Westinghouse. The parent company of Charlotte's Shaw Power Group, The Shaw Group, owns 20% of Westinghouse.

Westinghouse and Babcock & Wilcox, also based in Charlotte, dismantled the Three-Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania after it experienced the worst nuclear accident in US history in 1979.

The Times reports: The plans to take apart the reactors are complicated not only by the volatility of the situation but also by the uncertainty about the reactors' condition once they finally cool. No one has ever decommissioned four damaged reactors at one power plant, let alone reactors rocked by a powerful earthquake and swamped by a tsunami.

The American teams began arriving in Japan about two weeks ago, the paper reports. But work cannot start in earnest, it says, until TEPCO gets the reactors under control. "All things hinge on having safe access," David Richards, a president at Babcock & Wilcox told the Times. S.C. regulators let activist intervene in Duke nuclear proceeding

S.C. regulators have rejected Duke Energy's bid to prevent anti-nuclear activist Tom Clements from participating in hearings on allowing Duke to spend \$229 million more on planning for the proposed Lee Nuclear Station.

Clements, who is with S.C. Friends of the Earth, filed to intervene in the hearings as an individual. That allows him to participate — and represent his organization's viewpoint — without hiring a lawyer.

Duke objected. It noted Clements is not a Duke customer — living in Columbia, S.C. — and so had no direct interest in the outcome of the request.

The S.C. Public Service Commission voted unanimously Friday to let Clements participate.

Duke has already spent \$230 million on planning for the plant, which would be built near Gaffney, S.C. If the commission grants Duke's request, it would be possible for the company to add those costs into its rate base, regardless of whether the plant is built. Clements and his organization object to building the plant. N.C. cities still seek rate concessions from Duke in Progress merger

The city of New Bern has talked to federal regulators about reducing the costs for power from Progress Energy as part of its proposed acquisition by Duke Energy, the New Bern Sun Journal reports.

The city continues to seek allies among other eastern N.C. cities to help pay for a lawyer to represent the cities in merger hearings before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. New Bern would like other cities to chip in \$40,000 to \$100,000 for the effort.

Last week, New Bern Mayor Lee Bettis attended a meeting of the N.C. Municipal Power Agency that represents 20 eastern cities that have their own power utilities. He said his fellow city officials showed interest in the proposal, but no agreements have been made on providing money for a lawyer. John Downey covers the energy industry for the Charlotte Business Journal. [Click here to read more recent postings on Power City.](#) To get an RSS feed for Power City [click here.](#)

Shaw Net Income Falls On Yen-dollar Swings (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

Shaw Group Inc., an engineering and construction company whose projects include nuclear power, said on Monday that its second-quarter profit tumbled sharply mainly due to charges to cover big swings in the value of the dollar versus the yen.

Shaw reported a profit of \$1.2 million, or a penny a share, for the quarter that ended Feb. 28, compared with net income of \$61.5 million, or 72 cents per share, for the same period last year. The latest period includes a charge of \$28.7 million linked to foreign exchange losses, while the year-ago period included a gain of \$24.2 million.

Excluding the company's Westinghouse segment, Shaw would have earned \$35 million, or 40 cents per share, in the latest period. The drop in the US dollar versus the yen negatively affected that division because the company used bonds denominated in the yen to finance its 20 percent stake in the Westinghouse Group nuclear segment. Shaw's results also were trimmed by reduced earnings on a major petrochemical project.

Revenue fell 12 percent to \$1.42 billion from \$1.62 billion a year earlier.

Analysts had been expecting a profit of 45 cents per share on revenue of \$1.55 billion, according to FactSet. Analysts typically exclude one-time items such as expected currency changes.

Shaw said its nuclear power construction work continues as planned. The nuclear power industry has faced intense scrutiny in the wake of last month's earthquake and tsunami in Japan, which badly damaged nuclear facilities. Authorities there are still struggling to contain radiation from overheating reactors nearly a month later.

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It also said its nuclear construction and emergency response experience "positions us to assist with the recovery efforts in Japan and any future modification needs to existing power plants in the US and internationally."

For all of fiscal 2011, Shaw said it expects earnings per share to range between \$1.86 and \$1.91 on revenue of \$6.3 billion. Analysts are expecting net income of \$1.76 per share on revenue of \$6.56 billion, on average.

Shaw said it identified an accounting error linked to how revenue was calculated on an energy contract. As a result, Shaw overstated 2009 revenue by \$3.4 million and net income by \$2.2 million, and overstated 2010 earnings by \$10.7 million and revenues by \$16.7 million. It is revising its 2010 report to correct the mistake.

Shaw shares fell 48 cents to close at \$34.97.

Georgia moves to swap drugs for executions (AUGC)

[Augusta Chronicle](#), April 12, 2011

ATLANTA — Georgia prison officials are laying the groundwork to swap out a key sedative used for lethal injections after federal regulators took the state's stockpile of sodium thiopental, which is in short supply nationwide, according to more than 1,000 pages of documents reviewed by The Associated Press.

State Department of Corrections officials met with counterparts in Ohio and Oklahoma, two states that have already used another drug, pentobarbital, to execute inmates. They have also collected hundreds of pages of legal filings and other documents about the use of pentobarbital in those states, according to files obtained through an open records request.

The US Drug Enforcement Administration took Georgia's supply of sodium thiopental last week over questions whether the state circumvented law to get it.

The move effectively blocked Georgia from scheduling and carrying out any executions.

House speaker joins SRS H Canyon efforts

COLUMBIA — South Carolina House Speaker Bobby Harrell met with Savannah River Site managers and officials and members of the Aiken County legislative delegation Monday for a briefing on the Savannah River National Laboratory and the uncertain future of the site's plutonium-processing H Canyon.

"The purpose of the meeting wasn't to create or ask for next steps but to inform," said Clif Webb, the vice president of public affairs for Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the contractor that operates and manages the site. "We felt we had a great dialogue with the speaker."

Last month, the nine members of the Aiken County legislative delegation wrote to US Energy Secretary Steven Chu to lay out concerns about the effects of shifting funding away from H Canyon, as is proposed in the federal budget. Harrell spokesman Greg Foster said Monday that the speaker also planned to send a letter to Chu.

Retired General: US Vulnerable To Cyber Attacks (AP)

[Associated Press](#), April 11, 2011

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The United States is still "hugely vulnerable" to cyber attacks, but so are most other nations, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Monday.

"We're way late" in preparing to defend critical computer systems from hackers, enemies and others, retired Marine Gen. Peter Pace said.

Pace was chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the nation's highest military post, under then-President George W. Bush from 2005 until 2007. He spoke at the Space Foundation's Cyber 1.1 conference in Colorado Springs.

Pace said the US probably has the strongest offensive cyber capabilities of any nation, and it has employed cyber attacks in the past. After his remarks, he declined to say how many times that has happened, or to describe the circumstances.

Pace said the federal government should set security requirements for critical computer networks in the private sector, such as banking and finance.

Uniform requirements would prevent one corporation from gaining a competitive advantage by ignoring expensive upgrades. He also said it would encourage innovation by creating demand for security measures.

"We need to help prime that pump," said Pace, now president and CEO of SM&A, a management consulting firm.

Roger Cressey, an adviser on cyber security and counterterrorism under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, told the conference that data manipulation — surreptitiously altering critical information on computer networks — is an underrated threat to cyber security

"The government makes decisions based on the assumption of accuracy of the data it's using," Cressey said in an interview later. "If a creative adversary doesn't steal, but just manipulates, that throws our decision-making process into disarray."

He said the banking and financial system, with trillions of dollars of international transactions at stake, could also suffer.

Cressey, now a senior vice president for defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton, said he's not aware of any large-scale data manipulation attacks to date.

Gen. William Shelton, head of the Air Force Space Command, told the conference the US military still faces challenges in cyberspace, especially in "situational awareness" — a military term for knowing not only where an enemy is, but where it has been, where it's going and what its intentions are.

Shelton said computer-enabled weapons such as remotely piloted aircraft represent the future of warfare.

Cyber-security In The Spotlight At URI (PROJO)

By Michael P. McKinney

Providence Journal, April 12, 2011

The four-star general who leads the National Security Agency headlined a cyber-security conference at the University of Rhode Island on Monday that highlighted student and faculty research into such challenges as defending the power grid from cyber-attackers.

Gen. Keith Alexander told the 150 to 200 attendees that cyber-security "is one of the most important issues facing our nation today."

In 2008, he said, the US Defense Department found that it had "malicious software" in its networks, the result of people using certain drives to go from unclassified computer networks to classified ones. In response, a team identified the problem and built a system in 22 hours to rectify the situation. That incident led to the start of the US Cyber Command, which he also commands.

Alexander called URI and the state's congressional delegation leaders on cyber-security issues. He noted that a 1986 graduate of URI is "one of the architects" for cyber-security at the NSA.

Part of Alexander's role is to defend the military's computer systems from cyber-threats, but security problems affect other areas as well.

US Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse said that a report indicated that the monetary value of intellectual property in the corporate world stolen through forms of cyber-security breaches is vast. He said more legislation on cyber-security issues is expected.

US Rep. James R. Langevin said that the nation "still stands largely unprepared to deal with various potential cyber-security threats.

The defenders of the nation's military secrets and the protectors of corporations' trade secrets and people's identities are a varied group.

One is Wenkai Wang, 30, a doctoral-degree candidate at URI who contributed to assumption-defying research with faculty that found a cyber-attack on the power grid could be more effective on a substation that does not carry the highest power load.

The idea was to look at scenarios from an attacker's point of view to develop better defenses against such attacks. A "traditional attack strategy," according to a poster describing their research, held that cyber-attacks would be attempted on the substation that has a high power load.

Yan Sun, a URI professor who worked with Wang and other faculty, said the research, focused on one cyber-attacker. Future research will look at multiple cyber-attackers on a power grid.

Jeffrey Troy, deputy assistant director of the FBI's Cyber Security Division, said the agency uses data obtained through computer forensics to gather the "signatures" of various groups that attempt to compromise security.

And the FBI is using technologies such as MCARTA, which, Troy said, allows investigators to know within 48 hours what malicious software did in a given case.

Congress, Administration Grapple With Cyber Defense Authority (NGOV)

By Aliya Sternstein, Nextgov

[Nextgov](#), April 12, 2011

The head of the military unit overseeing cyberspace reaffirmed that the US Cyber Command cannot monitor civilian networks, noting its powerlessness over systems outside the .mil domain might require congressional action.

"I do not have the authority to look at what's going on in other government sectors, nor what would happen to critical infrastructures. That means that I can't stop [an assault on nonmilitary networks]," Cyber Command chief Gen. Keith Alexander said during remarks at a University of Rhode Island symposium on the increasing threat of cyberattacks.

The division of responsibility between the Pentagon and the Homeland Security Department is at the center of a debate on cybersecurity legislation. DHS currently keeps an eye on vulnerabilities in the .gov and other civilian domains, while the Defense Department has visibility only into .mil networks. The White House has yet to weigh in on how to empower Defense to avert a potential cyberwar without running astray of civil rights and privacy laws. But Alexander offered hints about what the Pentagon might be pushing the Obama administration to consider.

"Civil liberties and privacy are not [upheld] at the expense of cybersecurity," he said. "They will benefit from cybersecurity." With the proper oversight from the administration and Congress, the military would be held accountable for any transgressions, Alexander added.

Alexander, who also serves as National Security Agency director, noted the Pentagon and DHS presently are sharing information, security equipment and staff at an NSA office, under the guidance of legal counsel and privacy officers.

He does not expect an imminent cyberattack by a nation state against the United States, but the country must be prepared for the day when adversaries take to the Web to destroy the US power grid, derail electronic stock exchanges, or shut down online communications, Alexander said.

Cyberspace is a domain that must be protected like the air, land and sea, "but it's also unique in that it's inside and outside military, civilian and government" domains, he said. Military forces "have to have the ability to move seamlessly when our nation is under attack to defend it . . . the mechanisms for doing that have to be laid out and agreed to. The laws don't exist in this area."

In March, Rep. James R. Langevin, D-R.I., who chairs the Congressional Cybersecurity Caucus, introduced a bill, H.R. 1136, that would create a cybersecurity review board with representation from civilian agencies, Defense and the White House. The measure has backing from Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., a senior member of the Armed Services Committee.

"There is no one single person or office leading our government's efforts to keep our networks safe," Langevin said during the event. "My proposal establishes one national office to oversee cybersecurity, while ensuring the government and military can acquire the best technology and undergo regular reviews to evaluate their performance."

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., in recent weeks has pressured the administration to deliver to Congress a proposal for cyber reforms. Whitehouse, who also attended the forum, said last week lawmakers have been unable to act on network security legislation because they haven't received direction from the White House on assimilating the multiple cyber bills under consideration in both chambers.

The administration "will soon be prepared to reengage with Congress on this issue," said Whitehouse, chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism, who also attended the forum.

"We hope to do a major bill this year," he added, noting that Langevin's bill "will be an important and foundational document."

IN THE BLOGS:

Avoiding Nuclear Safety | The Energy Collective (ENCOL)

By Charles Barton

[Energy Collective](#), April 12, 2011

The real question about nuclear safety is not "can nuclear accidents be avoided," but "do we want to do what ever is required to avoid nuclear accidents." As it turns out avoiding and mitigating nuclear accidents is not terribly expensive, nor does it make nuclear power impractical, but does require the nuclear industry to change the way it does business. The current nuclear safety philosophy centers on what is called "Defense in Depth." "Defense in Depth:"

Defense in Depth can refer to a system of barriers which serve to prevent the exposure of people to radioactive materials that originate in the reactor core and which might for a variety of reasons, escape from the reactor. This is the central fear for nuclear accident. At one time it was believed that everything that was inside the reactor was fair game for escape, but some materials are a whole lot more likely to escape than others. One way to prevent the escape of radioactive materials is to erect a system of barriers that are intended to block the paths taken by radioactive materials out of reactor cores. The history of major reactor accidents suggests that in the event of a major reactor accident, blocking the paths taken out of the reactor core by some materials may prove difficult. Indeed it might prove a better safety approach to capture some nuclear materials and remove them to a safe places outside the core, rather than preventing their escape.

One reason for doing this is that the escape of some radioactive materials particularly gases and materials that are likely to turn into gases in a serious nuclear accident may be difficult to prevent, if an accident leads to core overheating and meltdown. The conventional defense system of core meltdown prevention is to back up the core coolant system with secondary coolants systems, and back up the secondary systems with emergency coolant systems. Passive emergency coolant circulation is more reliable as well as less expensive than emergency coolant circulation by pumps, as well as more reliable. The Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors, were designed for emergency coolant water circulation by use of electrical powered pumps. The pumps were powered in the event of a grid shutdown by fossil fuel powered generators. Those generators were vulnerable to tsunami at Fukushima Dai-ichi. The Westinghouse AP-1000 is designed with a more advanced safety system.

A large tank of emergency coolant water is located above the AP-1000 core. In the event of an emergency shut down, the loss of electricity automatically releases valves that allow the flow of emergency coolant water from the tank to the core. The flow itself is powered by gravity and the coolant lines lead directly from the tank to the core. Such a system provided superior nuclear safety at Fukushima Dai-ichi. In addition to the emergency passive water coolant system, the Westinghouse AP-1000 has a passive air cooling system. The passive containment cooling system (PCS), provides the safety-related ultimate heat sink for the plant. The PCS cools the containment following an accident so that design pressure is not exceeded and pressure is rapidly reduced. The steel containment vessel provides the heat transfer surface that removes heat from inside the containment and transfers it to the atmosphere. Heat is removed from the containment vessel by the continuous, natural circulation of air. During an accident, air cooling is supplemented by water evaporation. The water drains by gravity from a tank located on top of the containment shield building.

In addition a more primary emergency water cooling system relies on natural water circulation to remove decay heat from the AP-1000 core in the event of an accident

.A literature survey reveals that there have been many experimental and numerical investigations on the characteristics of different PRHRs. The Westinghouse advanced passive PWRs, AP-600, AP-1000, and EP-1000 (IAEA-TECDOC-1391, 2004; Adomaitis et al. [1]; Reyes and Hochreiter [2]; Zhang et al. [3]) adopt passive core cooling system (PXS) to protect the plant against reactor coolant system (RCS) leaks and ruptures of various sizes and locations. The PXS includes a 100% capacity passive residual heat removal heat exchanger (PRHR HX), which satisfies the safety criteria for loss of feedwater, feedwater and steam line breaks. The PRHR HX, immersed in the in-containment refueling water storage tank (IRWST), is connected through the cold leg and hot leg to the core. The IRWST water volume is sufficient to absorb decay heat for more than 1 hour before the water begins to boil. Once boiling starts in the IRWST, the steam passes to the containment and condenses on the inner surface of the steel containment vessel, and then drains by gravity back into the IRWST. The PRHR HX and the passive containment cooling system (PCCS) provide indefinite decay heat removal capability with no operator action required. The theoretical and experimental investigations on the PXS characteristics of AP600 indicate that the design of the PRHR is feasible and rational.

Despite the use of sophisticated passive safety features which greatly limit the likelihood of an accident that could lead to a core meltdown, both the AP-1000 and ESBWR employ the standard defense in depth barriers for the prevention of the release of radioactive materials in the event of nuclear accidents. The operation of advanced cooling system and emergency cooling system technologies, tend to make the breakdown of fission product release barriers even less likely than would be the case in older reactor designs.

This reactor manufacturers continue to make impressive advances in reactor safety designs. Yet critics of nuclear power seem totally unwilling to acknowledge any improvement in nuclear safety. Michael Collins, a self styled liberal, and "Joiquin" of the Agonist, are implacable enemies of nuclear power. "Joiquin" thinks that nuclear power is so dangerous that the nuclear power industry and the media are afraid to tell the truth about its dangers. Joiquin says, The truth is, there is a big fat lie that the nuclear

power industry and the media are foisting on the public and that has not changed. We are supposed to believe that this hydrogen explosion is no biggie; course it isn't; it's just a direct hit

Of course Joiquin did not go into a similar tizzy when a natural gas fired power plant exploded in Connecticut last year. The fact that the Dai-ichi explosions killed six fewer people than the single Klean Energy Systems explosion. Of course if you get killed in a nuclear plant accident, you are much more dead than if you are killed in a natural gas plant accident. Even if no one is actually killed in a nuclear plant accident it is much more deadly and dangerous than an accident involving fossil fuels that produces real casualties. Joiquin tells So, back to the big lie; what is it? This lie has to do with the nature of nuclear power in the future. Everyone is asking, can we make nuclear technology, the current, nuclear technology safe? In truth, the current risks with the nuclear fuel cycle i.e., the risks of contaminating the environment, are not the risks of the future because the current nuclear fuel cycle is not the fuel cycle that will be used in the future.

Note, that Joiquin completely ignores the Improvement in reactor design, and focuses on the fuel cycle, as if the fuel cycle alone makes reactors unsafe. US government intend to use more exotic fuel cycles in the future power plants including, . . . Thorium, and breeder reactors of various types.

All of this is hush, hush because, the industry and their government and media proxies don't want to talk about this fact too much because the waste from these future fuel cycles is far more dangerous than most of the stuff slowly making a large part of Japan uninhabitable for the next few dozen millennium. In other words, the discussion in the media about future nuclear safety is completely dishonest.

Well somebody is being dishonest. but I would not say it is the industry and the government. Claims such as a "large part of Japan uninhabitable for the next few dozen millennium," are quite dishonest, but all too typical of the sensationalist exaggerations of the anti-nuclear lobby.

Michael Collins basically reposts the previous post.

How did Joiquin find his material? He references the Wikipedia on thorium and tells us, Thorium could theoretically be used to fuel future reactors but probably nothing like what we have now; they would be cooled with liquid salt. The advantage is the Thorium is much more naturally abundant than Uranium. Another potential bonanza! Except of course for a few minor problems: doesn't work yet, creates a contaminant that is a gamma ray emitter U 232 which decays into many more alpha and beta emitters making the spent fuel very difficult to handle and very toxic for hundreds of years.

In a note on sources Joiquin adds Arjun Makhijani and Michele Boyd's "Thorium Fuel: No Panacea for Nuclear Power.

" Makhijani is usually one of the more careful of the nuclear critics but in his thorium fuel essay he makes a number of large errors, including a committing the fallacy of composition when he claims, Using thorium in a nuclear reactor creates radioactive waste that proponents claim would only have to be isolated from the environment for 500 years, as opposed to the irradiated uranium-only fuel that remains dangerous for hundreds of thousands of years. This claim is wrong. The fission of thorium creates long-lived fission products like technetium-99 (half-life over 200,000 years). While the mix of fission products is somewhat different than with uranium fuel, the same range of fission products is created.

What Makhijani failed to recognize is that a mixed group of fission products come out of the reactor when the thorium fuel cycle is used. Once they leave the reactor they began to go through decay process that lead toward stability. After 300 - not 500 - years the decay process has gone far enough that the mixed group of fission products is no more radioactive than thorium ore was when it was dug out of the ground. The fact that technetium-99 has a half-life of over 200,000 years means it was not very radioactive to begin with. Technetium-99 is so safe that it is used in medical tests. Collins, as I noted, simply quotes Joiquin. The blind leading the blind. It is clear that neither Collins nor Joiquin knows anything about either the nuclear fuel cycle nor nuclear safety, but they both pose as nuclear safety experts, as if total ignorance was not a hazard to telling truth from lies.

Figures like Collins and "Joiquin" and organizations like the Sierra Club and Greenpeace are enemies of nuclear safety because they deny the very possibility that nuclear power can be made safe or even safer. As long as the public listens to such arguments, it runs the risk that nuclear power may be less safe than it could be.

INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR NEWS:

Japan Regulators Raise Severity Of Nuclear Accident (USAT/AP)

USA Today, April 12, 2011

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's nuclear safety agency has raised the severity rating of the crisis at its nuclear plant to the highest level, on par with the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

An official with the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan, speaking on national television, said Tuesday the rating was raised from 5 to 7.

The official, who was not named, said the amount of radiation leaking from the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant was around 10% of that in the Chernobyl accident.

Meanwhile, workers at Japan's tsunami-stricken nuclear power complex discovered a small fire near a reactor building Tuesday but it was extinguished quickly, the plant's operator said.

Tokyo Electric Power Co., which operates the disabled Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, said the fire at a box that contains batteries in a building near the No. 4 reactor was discovered at about 6:38 a.m. Tuesday and was put out seven minutes later.

It wasn't clear whether the fire was related to a magnitude-6.3 earthquake that shook the Tokyo area Tuesday morning. The cause of the fire is being investigated.

"The fire was extinguished immediately. It has no impact on Unit 4's cooling operations for the spent fuel rods," said TEPCO spokesman Naoki Tsunoda.

The plant was damaged in a massive tsunami March 11 that knocked out cooling systems and backup diesel generators, leading to explosions at three reactors and a fire at a fourth that was undergoing regular maintenance and was empty of fuel.

The magnitude-9.0 earthquake that caused the tsunami immediately stopped the three reactors, but overheated cores and a lack of cooling functions led to further damage.

Engineers have been able to pump water into the damaged reactors to cool them down, but leaks have resulted in the pooling of tons of contaminated, radioactive water that has prevented workers from conducting further repairs.

Aftershocks on Monday briefly cut power to backup pumps, halting the injection of cooling water for about 50 minutes before power was restored.

A month after the disaster, more than 145,000 people are still living in shelters, and the government on Monday added five communities to a list of places people should leave to avoid long-term radiation exposure.

A 12-mile radius has already been cleared around the plant.

The disaster is believed to have killed more than 25,000 people, but many of those bodies were swept out to sea and more than half of those feared dead are still listed as missing.

Aftershocks have taken more lives.

In Iwaki, a city close to the epicenter of a magnitude-7.0 tremor Monday, a landslide brought down three houses, trapping up to seven people. Four were rescued alive, but one of those — a 16-year-old girl — died at the hospital, a police official said. He would not give his name, citing policy.

Around 210,000 people have no running water and, following Monday's aftershocks, more than 240,000 people are without electricity.

In all, nearly 190,000 people have fled their homes, the vast majority of whom are living in shelters, according to the national disaster agency. About 85,000 are from the cleared zone around the nuclear plant; their homes may be intact, but it's not known when they'll be able to return to them.

Yutaka Endo said he feels like his life has been put on hold because of the nuclear crisis.

He fled Minami Soma and has been living in a shelter in Fukushima city for three weeks with his family.

"I can't make any plans because of the nuclear crisis. My home was fine, but I can't go back there because it is in a restricted area," said the 32-year-old, who used to tend bar. "I need to find a new job and a place to live so that we can get out of here. But I can't do anything until these zones are lifted."

Ryokou Sasaki said he and his elderly parents are in the same position. They've applied for temporary shelters, and are waiting to hear back.

He recently moved back home — to the northeastern port city of Kamaishi — to help his parents' with their fishing business.

"We're not in a place yet where we can even think about rebuilding the business yet," said the 40-year-old. "They seem to have given up."

Japan Rates Nuclear Crisis At Highest Severity Level (WP)

By Chico Harlan

Washington Post, April 12, 2011

TOKYO — Japanese authorities raised Tuesday their rating of the severity of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis to the highest level on an international scale, equal to that of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Officials with Japan's Nuclear Safety Commission reclassified the ongoing emergency from level 5, an "accident with off-site risk," to level 7, a "major accident." The reassessment comes at a time when the International Atomic Energy Agency says the plant is showing "early signs of recovery" but still in a critical condition.

The plant's debilitated reactors face constant threat of strong aftershocks, and the latest on Tuesday morning — a 6.2-magnitude temblor — caused a brief fire at a water sampling facility near Daiichi's No. 4 reactor. The Tokyo Electric Power Co., which operates the power plant, said that the critical process used to cool the hot fuel rods had not been interrupted, and radiation levels showed no signs of change.

A level 7 accident, according to the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale, is typified by a "major release of radioactive material with widespread health and environmental effects."

Previously only Chernobyl had been given a 7 rating. The 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear accident in Pennsylvania was rated a level 5 incident.

Radiation leaking from Fukushima Daiichi amounts to about 10 percent of that from the Chernobyl accident, a Nuclear Safety Commission official, who was not named, said on national television.

Nonetheless, the crisis has prompted the evacuation of tens of thousands who live within 19 miles of the plant. Japan's government had initially called for a mandatory evacuation within a 12-mile radius. But Japan on Monday widened its evacuation zone, selecting certain towns within 19 miles — those with higher radiation readings — for mandatory evacuation.

According to the Kyodo news agency, Japan's Nuclear Safety Commission reported Monday that the plant, at one point after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, had been releasing 10,000 terabecquerels of radioactivity per hour. The report did not specify when those radiation readings occurred. A release of tens of thousands of terabecquerels per hour, though, corresponds with the radiation leakage level that the IAEA uses as a minimum benchmark for a level 7 accident.

"This corresponds to a large fraction of the core inventory of a power reactor, typically involving a mixture of short- and long-lived radionuclides," an IAEA document says. "With such a release, stochastic health effects over a wide area, perhaps involving more than one country, are expected."

Japanese Declare Crisis At Level Of Chernobyl (WSJ)

By Phred Dvorak, Juro Osawa And Yuka Hayashi

Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Japan Nuclear Disaster Put On Par With Chernobyl (NYT)

By Hiroko Tabuchi And Keith Bradsher

New York Times, April 12, 2011

TOKYO — Japan has decided to raise its assessment of the accident at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant to the worst rating on an international scale, putting the disaster on par with the 1986 Chernobyl explosion, the Japanese nuclear regulatory agency said on Tuesday.

On the International Nuclear Event Scale, the rating, Level 7, is for a nuclear accident that involves "widespread health and environmental effects" and the "external release of a significant fraction of the reactor core inventory."

The scale, which was developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency and countries that use nuclear energy, leaves it to the nuclear agency of the country where an accident occurs calculate a rating based on complicated criteria.

Japan had rated its accident at Level 5, the same rating as the Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania in 1979. Level 7 has been applied only to the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in the former Soviet Union.

Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said at a news conference Tuesday that the rating resulted from new estimates that suggest that "tens of thousands of terabecquerels" of radioactive material per hour were released from the plant in the aftermath of the destructive March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

Still, the total amount of radioactive material released so far is equal to about 10 percent of that released in the Chernobyl accident, the agency said. (The measurement refers to how much radioactive material was emitted, not the dose absorbed by living things.)

The scale of the radiation leak has since dropped to a tiny fraction of those levels, the agency said.

The revised rating raised new questions about why the government has been so slow in releasing data and about whether the data continues to be underestimated.

Michael Friedlander, a former senior nuclear power plant operator for 13 years in the United States, said that the biggest surprise in the Japanese reassessment was that it took a month for public confirmation that so much radiation had been released.

Some in the nuclear industry have been saying for weeks that the nuclear accident released large amounts of radiation, but Japanese officials have played down this possibility.

The announcement came as Japan was preparing to urge more residents around the crippled nuclear plant to evacuate, because of concerns over long-term exposure to radiation.

Also on Monday, tens of thousands of people bowed their heads in silence at 2:46 p.m., exactly one month since the 9.0-magnitude earthquake and ensuing tsunami brought widespread destruction to Japan's northeast coast.

The mourning was punctuated by another strong aftershock near Japan's Pacific coast, which briefly set off a tsunami warning, killed a 16-year-old girl and knocked out cooling at the severely damaged Fukushima Daiichi power station for almost an hour, underscoring the vulnerability of the plant's reactors to continuing seismic activity.

On Tuesday morning, there was another strong aftershock, which shook Tokyo.

The authorities have already ordered people living within a 12-mile radius of the plant to evacuate, and recommended that people remain indoors or avoid an area within a radius of 18 miles.

The government's decision to expand the zone came in response to radiation readings that would be worrisome over months in certain communities beyond those areas, underscoring how difficult it has been to predict the ways radiation spreads from the damaged plant.

Unlike the previous definitions of the areas to be evacuated, this time the government designated specific communities that should be evacuated, instead of a radius expressed in miles.

The radiation has not spread evenly from the reactors, but instead has been directed to some areas and not others by weather patterns and the terrain. Iitate, one of the communities told on Monday to prepare for evacuation, lies well beyond the 18-mile radius, but the winds over the last month have tended to blow northwest from the Fukushima plant toward Iitate, which may explain why high readings were detected there.

Yukio Edano, the government's chief cabinet secretary, said that the government would order Iitate and four other towns to prepare to evacuate.

Officials are concerned that people in these communities are being exposed to radiation equivalent to at least 20 millisieverts a year, he said, which could be harmful to human health over the long term. Evacuation orders will come within a month for Katsurao, Namie, Iitate and parts of Minamisoma and Kawamata, Mr. Edano said.

People in five other areas may also be told to evacuate if the conditions at the Fukushima Daiichi plant grow worse, Mr. Edano said. Those areas are Hirono, Naraha, Kawauchi, Tamura and other sections of Minamisoma.

"This measure is not an order for you to evacuate or take actions immediately," he said. "We arrived at this decision by taking into account the risks of remaining in the area in the long term." He appealed for calm and said that the chance of a large-scale radiation leak from the Fukushima Daiichi plant had, in fact, decreased.

Mr. Edano also said that pregnant women, children and hospital patients should stay out of the area within 19 miles of the reactors and that schools in that zone would remain closed.

Until now, the Japanese government had refused to expand the evacuation zone, despite urging from the International Atomic Energy Agency. The United States and Australia have advised their citizens to stay at least 50 miles away from the plant.

The international agency, which is based in Vienna, said Sunday that its team measured radiation on Saturday of 0.4 to 3.7 microsieverts per hour at distances of 20 to 40 miles from the damaged plant — well outside the initial evacuation zone. At that rate of accumulation, it would take 225 days to 5.7 years to reach the Japanese government's threshold level for evacuations: radiation accumulating at a rate of at least 20 millisieverts per year.

In other words, only the areas with the highest readings would qualify for the new evacuation ordered by the government.

Mr. Friedlander, the former nuclear plant operator, who is a specialist in emergency responses to nuclear accidents, said that the Japanese decision to evacuate more communities made sense not just to protect people, but also to make the eventual decontamination of farms and communities easier.

Allowing people and nonemergency vehicles to continue moving through both radiation-contaminated areas and safer areas farther from the Fukushima reactors runs the risk of spreading radioactively contaminated particles, which could result in more square miles of territory ultimately being contaminated. "Unless you gain control, it will be like trying to mop your kitchen floor with the kids running in and out of the house," Mr. Friedlander said.

Masataka Shimizu, the president of Tokyo Electric, visited the tsunami-stricken area on Monday for the first time since the crisis began. He called on the governor of Fukushima Prefecture, Yuhei Sato, but was refused a meeting. He left his business card instead.

Strong Quake Jolts Tokyo (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

TOKYO – A strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.3 has jolted in Tokyo and its environs.

Japan's Meteorological Agency said the quake struck at 8:08 a.m. local time (2308 GMT) Tuesday. The epicenter of the quake was located just off the coast of Chiba, east of Tokyo.

There were no initial reports of injuries or damage in the prefecture. No tsunami warning was issued.

The agency said the quake was a string of strong aftershocks since the 9.0-magnitude earthquake and ensuing tsunami in northeastern Japan on March 11. The twin disasters decimated much of the region, killing up to 25,000 people and setting off radiation leaks at a coastal nuclear plant by knocking out its cooling systems.

Clinton To Visit Japan In Show Of Support (AFP)

AFP, April 12, 2011

WASHINGTON (AFP) – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will visit Japan in a show of support for the US ally as it recovers from a devastating earthquake, the State Department announced Monday.

Clinton will travel to Tokyo on Sunday, after stops in South Korea and in Germany where she is attending a NATO conference, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said.

Clinton's trip aims to "show the United States' support for the people of Japan and to highlight our long-standing commitment to the alliance," Toner said in a statement.

She will hold talks with Prime Minister Naoto Kan and other senior Japanese officials, Toner said.

The announcement comes on the one-month anniversary of Japan's worst disaster since World War II, which killed at least 13,000 people and left another 14,000 missing in a massive earthquake and debris-laden tsunami.

The United States, whose military presence in Japan has sometimes been controversial, deployed some 15,000 troops to assist in relief.

Senior US officials were also expected to participate in a memorial service later Monday at the Washington National Cathedral.

Clinton will take part in a NATO conference on Thursday and Friday in Berlin, where she will hold talks on alliance-backed military operations in Libya and Afghanistan, the State Department said.

She will head Saturday to South Korea for talks with President Lee Myung-Bak "as part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen the alliance and to discuss cooperation on regional issues," Toner said.

Clinton To Visit Germany, Japan, SKorea This Week (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

WASHINGTON – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton will travel to Germany and Japan this week for talks on Libya and other crises with NATO allies in Berlin and to show support for the earthquake- and tsunami-stricken Japanese people. She also will visit South Korea.

The State Department announced Monday that Clinton will depart Wednesday for the German capital where she will attend a meeting of NATO foreign ministers and hold separate discussions with officials from Germany and other European nations on Thursday and Friday.

Over the weekend, she will visit South Korea and then Japan, which is recovering from a massive earthquake and resulting tsunami and aftershocks that have crippled the country's northeast. The events also damaged nuclear reactors that are now spewing radiation.

Clinton To Attend NATO Meeting, Visit Seoul, Tokyo (REU)

Reuters, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Cleaning Up Fukushima: A Challenge To The Core (NPR)

NPR, April 12, 2011

Nuclear engineers in Japan are dealing with two problems at the same time: They are working to fully stabilize the reactors at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, and they are trying to control the release of radioactive material.

It could take weeks or months to stabilize the reactors. And containing and cleaning up the radioactive material could take at least 10 years, at a cost of more than \$10 billion. Even though many of the details about what's happening at the reactors are not known, experts can predict the tasks ahead for workers.

Back in 1979, nuclear engineer Lake Barrett coordinated cleanup at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island reactor for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He breaks down the cleanup challenge to the basic elements of ancient Greece. The Greeks had fire, air, water and earth. At Fukushima, it's pretty much the same: energy, air, water and solids.

A radiation decontamination area was built into the entrance of a building at the Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant. Damage to the facilities and the reactor buildings is slowing efforts to stabilize the nuclear crisis.

"So if you go back to the four basic principles, what the engineers are doing in Fukushima is first they have to deal with energy dissipation — that is the cooling of the decay products in the core — keep the core cool," Barrett says.

Over the past month, they've managed to do that pretty well, Barrett says, but at a price: They are cooling it with copious amounts of water, which has led to the continued venting of sometimes radioactive steam. It's nowhere near as bad as it was in the early days of the crisis, Barrett says, but gaseous releases will continue to be a problem until the complex can shift to a better cooling system.

For now, there's a watery mess at the plant.

"In the case of Three Mile Island, we had about half a million gallons of very highly radioactive water in the basement of the containment building," Barrett says. "It was about 10 feet deep. They're facing the same situation in Fukushima, but they have three of these cores that have severe damage to them, so they probably have tens of millions of gallons of the same highly radioactive water that they're dealing with."

That's a huge challenge, but engineers at Three Mile Island were able to decontaminate the radioactive wastewater.

"The very first systems we had within 10 days, and then we had a better system operating in a month," Barrett says. "And we had a better-yet system operating in about a year. That water was all cleaned up at Three Mile Island and it was safely discharged."

Fukushima Dai-ichi may or may not have any functioning systems to clean up its water, and there's no telling how much more radioactive water is going to be produced during the continuing operations there. But Barrett says the plant does have large tanks for storing contaminated water and a barge is on the way to store more.

Workers operate remote-controlled rubble-removing equipment at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear complex. Though robotic machines will be able to clear some of the larger debris from the facility, some people will most likely be needed to work inside the reactor buildings.

Getting To The Core Of The Cleanup

Once the energy, gas and water aspects of the nuclear crisis are under control, the most highly radioactive materials — the solids in the reactor cores — remain. Just getting to them is a problem.

After the Three Mile Island accident, the core was still intact, but overhead cranes that usually do the lifting work were damaged by fire. So workers first had to refurbish the cranes to lift the reactor's lid. In fact, it was five years until they could look inside the reactor; only then did they discover that 30 percent of the nuclear core had melted. Still, the engineers on the scene figured out how to deal with that.

"They worked down through 20 feet of water for shielding with long tools and started picking up the pieces of broken fuel in the core and placing it in special canisters with vents and filters on them," Barrett says. They put those canisters in a transport cask and shipped them to Idaho, where they are stored like other waste from nuclear reactors.

Japanese engineers will probably try to do the same basic thing at Fukushima Dai-ichi.

Leo Lessard, a nuclear engineer at the French company Areva, says just getting to the cores at Fukushima Dai-ichi is going to be much more difficult than it was at Three Mile Island. For starters, the tops of two buildings have collapsed, so that debris will have to be cleared.

Nuclear-Reactor Industry Faces Challenge (WSJ)

Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Siemens, Areva End Nuclear JV, Legal Spat Goes On (REU)

Reuters, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Anti-Nuclear Protesters Block Entry To EDF's London Offices (BLOOM)

By Chris Spillane

Bloomberg News, April 12, 2011

Activists barricaded a road outside the London offices of Electricite de France SA today to protest plans by Europe's biggest power producer to build a new generation of U.K. nuclear power plants.

About ten demonstrators from the Boycott EDF group erected two 14-foot (4-meter) high tripods on Grosvenor Place by Victoria rail station at around 8:00 a.m. today and blocked cars and road access in the city for around six hours.

Between the structures hung a banner marked "nuclear disaster area." The road was reopened at 2:05 p.m. and two arrests were made, according to a Metropolitan Police spokesman, who declined to be identified, citing force policy.

"EDF has spent a massive amount of money marketing as an environment-friendly company," said Bella Benson, a spokeswoman for the activist group, in an e-mailed statement. "But the truth is that it's planning to lumber us with an outdated form of energy that is incredibly dangerous, extremely expensive and completely unnecessary."

The Paris-based utility, which is the world's largest operator of nuclear reactors, said nuclear energy has a "vital role" in maintaining the U.K.'s future electricity supply.

"That view is backed by the government and industry and a large proportion of the public," spokeswoman Phillippa Coates said in an e-mailed statement.

Around 3,800 people gathered at EDF's oldest nuclear plant at Fessenheim, France, yesterday to demand its shutdown, Le Monde reported, citing police estimates.

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To contact the editor responsible for this story: Andrew Blackman at ablackman@bloomberg.net EDF FP CN

Iran Touts Major Advances In Nuclear Program (WP)

By Joby Warrick

Washington Post, April 12, 2011

Iran is proclaiming significant gains in its nuclear program, progress that Western officials and experts say could effectively erase setbacks from recent cyber attacks and shorten the timeline for acquiring nuclear weapons.

Scientists from Iran's atomic energy program, in announcements over the past three days, said they have successfully tested advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium and are less than a month away from starting the country's first commercial nuclear reactor. The announcements, linked to the observance of "nuclear technology day" in Tehran, underscore recent assessments by intelligence officials and Western nuclear experts suggesting that Iran is preparing to speed up its production of enriched uranium.

Although many of the advances have not been fully implemented, the apparent progress has prompted some experts to redraw their forecasts for how quickly the country could build an atomic arsenal if it chose to do so.

The pronouncements also appear intended to counter perceptions that Iran's nuclear program has been hobbled by a computer worm that heavily damaged the country's main uranium enrichment facilities in a series of attacks in 2009 and 2010. During a weekend ceremony lauding the accomplishments, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared that the "Iranian nation cannot be defeated," despite sanctions and other threats.

"Not only should we be able to use all our capacities and potentials in nuclear technology, we should also export nuclear know-how," Iran's semiofficial broadcaster Press TV quoted the Iranian leader as saying.

The advanced centrifuges tested by Iran have been under development for several years. Experts say the new machines are far more sophisticated than the 1950s-era technology Iran has been using and will be far more efficient than their predecessors. According to the first reliable published estimates, the increase in the production of enriched uranium could be huge — an increase in output of at least 600 percent per machine.

"If they can get the new machines performing well, and in large numbers, it will make a big difference," said Olli Heinonen, a former nuclear safeguards chief for the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency.

In theory, a few hundred of the new machines could produce enough enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon in less than a year, he said.

Iran quietly notified U.N. inspectors in January that it was moving forward with plans to phase in hundreds of the sophisticated centrifuges — models dubbed IR-2M and IR-4 — at its main enrichment plant in the city of Natanz. On Saturday,

Fereydoun Abbasi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said the machines had been tested and were ready for use.

Abbasi also announced that Iran's first commercial nuclear reactor, at Bushehr, will begin operating as soon as May 5 after technicians overcome problems with the reactor's fuel. He disclosed the start of a new production line for uranium oxide, the material from which nuclear fuel rods are made.

Neither the United States nor the IAEA have published performance estimates for Iran's next-generation centrifuges, but a US intelligence official knowledgeable about Iran's nuclear program did not dispute Heinonen's observations.

"US intelligence officials share the IAEA's concern" about Iran's expanding capabilities, the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Natanz has more than 8,000 centrifuges to enrich uranium, ostensibly for nuclear reactor fuel. But those machines have been notoriously unreliable and prone to attack.

In late 2009 and early 2010, a computer worm known as Stuxnet penetrated the computer system at Natanz. Although the cyber attack appears to have damaged as many as 1,000 machines, Iran has moved quickly to replace broken equipment and has continued to process uranium at a steady pace.

Heinonen, who until last year oversaw the IAEA's teams of inspectors in Iran, recently presented performance estimates for the IR-2M during a seminar held by arms-control advocates in Washington.

Using an analysis that he said drew from "multiple sources," Heinonen calculated that the new machines would produce enriched uranium at a slightly higher rate than comparable machines made in Pakistan and North Korea and more than six times as fast as the IR-1 centrifuge currently used by Iran.

Iran, which began enriching uranium on an industrial scale in 2007, is now thought to possess enough low-enriched fuel to make at least two bombs if the material were processed further. The country has consistently maintained that it does not intend to make nuclear weapons.

Heinonen's figures are in line with Iran's estimates for the capability of the new machine, which Iranian scientists have been testing since 2009.

The IR-1 machines the nation uses are based on a 1950s Dutch design that was stolen by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan and sold to Iran decades ago. The IR-1 is relatively slow and inefficient and notoriously unreliable.

Although US officials have long suspected that Iran is capable of making better centrifuges, Iranian scientists have struggled to obtain the kinds of specialized materials needed to build them. The IR-2M, for example, is constructed largely from a carbon-fiber material similar to the Kevlar used in modern military helmets and body armor. Intelligence agencies think that Iran is not capable of making the material indigenously in significant quantities, and Iran has been repeatedly thwarted in its efforts to buy carbon fiber abroad.

Heinonen, however, noted that U.N. inspectors never were able to determine how much carbon fiber Iran managed to acquire before international sanctions dried up the market for such advanced materials. The IAEA also knows little about how and where the Iranians are building their new machines, he said.

"I think they're probably limited in their ability to get these materials," Heinonen said, "but the question is: How much do they already have?"

Iran To Build New Research Reactors (AP)

Associated Press, April 12, 2011

TEHRAN, Iran – Iran will need more enriched uranium to fuel the "four or five" new research reactors it is planning on building, the country's nuclear chief said on Monday.

Fereidoun Abbasi told the semi-official ISNA news agency that Iran is planning to build the new research reactors "in the next few years" to produce medical radioisotopes for patients.

To fuel these reactors, Iran needs to continue enriching uranium to 20 percent — something which alarms the West because the process could eventually be used to produce material for a nuclear weapon.

Abbasi, a 52-year-old professor of nuclear isotopes at Tehran's Defense Ministry, was appointed Iran's nuclear chief in February after he survived an assassination attempt in November. He was wounded in the bomb attack.

Tehran contends its nuclear program is intended only for a civilian power.

The United States and its allies suspect is seeking to build nuclear weapons, and the United Nations has laid down four rounds of sanction to force Iran to stop its enrichment program.

Germany Rebuffs US Calls To Shut Iran Bank (WSJ)

By David Crawford

Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2011

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Iran Blames Pipeline Explosion On Western Enemies (NYT)

By William Yong

New York Times, April 12, 2011

TEHRAN — A member of the Iranian parliament has blamed Western “enemies” for a blast on Friday that hit a major gas pipeline near the holy city of Qom.

The head of the parliament’s national security committee, Parviz Sorouri told reporters on Sunday that Western-backed “terrorists” were aiming to bring insecurity to Iran’s national energy transfer routes.

“By issuing resolutions and organizing terrorist activities, Western countries are aiming to redirect the events in Bahrain and Libya toward Iran,” Sorouri said.

Iranian officials continue to investigate the exact cause of the explosion, which struck a 56-inch diameter gas line near Qom early on Friday morning. No one was hurt in the blast.

The apparent bomb attack was the second incident in two months. Earlier, simultaneous explosions hit three different points on a gas pipeline within about 60 miles of the location of Friday’s blast.

The assertions of foreign interference came at a time when Iran is under increasing pressure from Persian Gulf states that accuse Iran of playing a role in the continuing unrest in Bahrain and after fresh accusations about the country’s nuclear program from an external opposition group.

Also on Sunday, Iran expelled three Kuwaiti diplomats in retaliation for Kuwait’s expulsion of three Iranian officials earlier this month, according to the Web site of Press TV, Iran’s state-financed satellite channel. The Kuwaiti government had accused the Iranians of spying on United States military bases.

Over the past week, top Iranian religious leaders have expressed anger over the involvement of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates in a combined regional military force to quell a civilian uprising in Bahrain, a Shiite majority state with which Iran has long historical and religious ties.

Fears over the development of Iran’s nuclear program were rekindled last Thursday, following a report from an exiled Iranian opposition group that said it revealed the location of a “secret” centrifuge factory 80 miles west of Iran’s capital, Tehran.

The National Council for Resistance in Iran — a lobby group associated with the banned leftist terrorist organization the People’s Mujahadeen — released what is said were satellite photographs of a facility that has produced parts for 100,000 uranium enrichment centrifuges over the past four years, though the group offered no further evidence.