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OUR OPINION: The NRC must be accountable to the public

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What's this?

QUINCY — According to members of the Plymouth Board of Selectmen, officials with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will no longer attend meetings open to the public.

As a government entity that's funded with \$1 billion in taxpayer monies and is charged with regulating the nation's 104 nuclear reactors, including Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station, we urge the NRC to reconsider.

The chair of Plymouth's board Matt Muratore said this week that in a conference call, his board was told by NRC officials who attended an April open meeting in Plymouth, that there would be no more open meetings.

"They felt that (the April meeting) was a flogging of the NRC by the board of selectmen," said Muratore "that we were grandstanding for the press ... They were very concerned with how the media spun this."

So much for what the NRC cites as its organizational values on its own website, "Service to the public .. Openness in communications ..."

The NRC will continue with its own annual public meeting in Plymouth, as required under its governing legislation, said NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan. He said officials try to answer every question they get from the public at those meetings.

If that's the case, then why did three Massachusetts congressmen, including U.S. Rep. Bill Keating, send a letter to the NRC in March urging it to host public meetings and opposing plans by the NRC to have only small group or one-on-one discussions – with NRC responses from those discussions to be contained within that small group?

So much for "openness in communication."

The NRC has long been criticized by nuclear industry watchdogs as being a rubberstamp for the nuclear industry itself. Its record of never denying a license renewal to any facility it oversees seems to support that. As does the resignation of NRC Commissioner Gregory Jaczko last summer following years of conflict with the other four members of the commission, where he often voted in the minority in support of public safety and transparency.

The public deserves to be heard by NRC officials. Neighbors of Pilgrim have real concerns about safety following the partial meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi in Japan. It wasn't the earthquake that caused the radiation spill, it was the failure of the cooling system. Following the disaster, a 12.5 mile radius had to be evacuated. The 41-year-old Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station is a twin design of Fukushima.

Add to that, Pilgrim's owner, Entergy Corp., has plans to build a new dry cask storage system, and transport some of the older spent fuel rods to this new storage structure.

Naturally the public has questions. If the NRC is more concerned with how it's image is portrayed in the media than with the people serves, then it's abdicating its responsibilities.

Without transparency from the NRC, people must then ask their elected officials to host public meetings – with the NRC commissioners as guests of honor.

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Make sure you live at least 150 miles from the nearest nuclear power plant.

Plymouth is Fukushima Daiichi waiting to happen.

Only God will be able to save those on the Cape if the melt down occurs in the middle of July.

Remember, the Japanese thought it could never happen to them, and lets not forget Chernobyl.

seriousordelerious

1 day ago

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