

# THREE MILE ISLAND

# ALERT

Three Mile Island Alert  
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August 1995

## ACTIVISTS TO COMMEMORATE HIROSHIMA, NAGASAKI BOMBINGS

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the U.S.'s nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Here is a partial list of commemorative activities in the Harrisburg area:

Saturday, July 29 - Saturday August 12, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m., except Sundays - Sixth Annual Exhibition Arts for Peace & Justice, Strawberry Square. An exhibition of socially concerned works of imaginative artists and writers.

Sunday, August 6 - Fellowship Hall, Market Square Presbyterian Church (Blackberry Street entrance) will be the site of the presentation of special messages from the mayors of Harrisburg, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. Additionally, *Free Our Planet of Nuclear Weapons*, produced by the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, and the award-winning *Teaching Tolerance* video will be shown. Discussion follows. Program runs from 7 - 9 p.m. Sponsored by the Harrisburg-Hiroshima-Nagasaki Committee.

Sunday, August 13 - Candles on the Water, a traditional Japanese memorial ceremony, at the Peace Garden of Riverfront Park. Meet at Ohev Shalom Temple, Front and Seneca Street (Seneca Street entrance) and proceed to the Peace Garden at 7:30 p.m. for presentations by representatives of major religious denominations, then go to Maclay Street entrance of the River Walk to float candle-lit boats. Sponsored by the Harrisburg-Hiroshima-Nagasaki Committee, the Interreligious Forum, and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

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Here is a partial listing of commemorative activities in the Washington, D.C. area:

Saturday, August 5 - a large rally will occur at Lafayette Park across from the White House at 2 p.m. Around 5 p.m., a procession will march to the Lincoln Memorial, where a live hook-up to the commemoration activities in Hiroshima will be in place.

Sunday, August 6 - Daniel Berrigan and Martin Sheen will speak at Washington's National Cathedral, 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (202) 635-0441.

Monday, August 7 - Civil disobedience at the Pentagon, sponsored by Pax Christi. For more information, call (202) 635-0441.

**SOUTH CAROLINA DUMP CLEARED TO REOPEN TO NATION**

*from AP reports*

On June 13, South Carolina approved reopening its low-level nuclear waste dump to the nation, easing pressure on hospitals, laboratories and nuclear power plants that have had to store the radioactive material. The action means companies and institutions that generate nuclear waste will be able to stop storing it in closets, trailers and outbuildings. "God bless them," said Jerry Rosen, a radiation safety officer at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Storing the medical center's radioactive waste hasn't been as big a problem as the federal and state paperwork he has to complete, Rosen said. "So in that sense it's a relief to me because I hate paperwork." he said.

Low-level waste includes items such as hospital gloves and other equipment used in nuclear medicine and filters from nuclear power plants. Although it does not include spent fuel from nuclear reactors, it does include radioactive waste that is extremely dangerous and long-lived.

**Please renew your TMIA membership**

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Membership:    \_\_\_ \$15 Regular Member    \_\_\_ \$50 Sustaining Member  
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Intervention Fund Contribution:  \$10    \$20    \$50    \$100  
Checks of \$50 or more can be made payable to the TMI Legal Fund for tax deduction purposes.

**RETURN TO: TMIA, 315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102**

The official registration and financial information for Three Mile Island Alert may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free, within PA, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

The Barnwell County landfill closed to all but eight states in the Southeast Compact last July. It was scheduled to close entirely this December, but Republican Gov. David Beasley asked the legislature to reopen it to everyone for as long as 10 years. Beasley said the state needed the money and the nation needed a disposal site. The only other low-level dump, in Hanford, Washington, serves only a handful of states.

## **PENNSYLVANIA TO GET WASTE DUMP REJECT**

*from the May 24, 1995, Titusville (PA) Herald*

Chem-Nuclear Systems, Inc. (CNSI), the firm under contract to site PA's planned low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) dump will receive the services of a man forced to leave a similar position in North Carolina. David Ebenhack, CNSI's project manager for a proposed NC radioactive waste site, was forced to leave his position in April, according to Chatham County, NC Research Coordinator Mary MacDowell. MacDowell said Ebenhack was transferred to CNSI's PA project, and she said he reportedly will work with a team to find a community to volunteer to host the radioactive waste site in PA.

In turn, the PA Project Manager for CNSI, Walt Newcomb, has been sent to NC as "temporary" project manager to replace Ebenhack, MacDowell said. Letters from Law Engineering, a subcontractor to CNSI, list Newcomb's title as manager of the N.C. Project, MacDowell said.

Tammy Latshaw, a spokesperson for Venango County-based STORM, an environmental group, initially told The Herald about the CNSI personnel switch, based on her contacts in NC and news articles there. MacDowell confirmed Latshaw's comments. "Why is PA getting a man that's not good enough for NC?" Latshaw said.

MacDowell said Ebenhack was forced out of the NC project by the head of that state's management authority to oversee radioactive waste dump plans, John MacMillan. MacDowell said Ebenhack spoke of his transfer to PA at the NC Authority's April 26 meeting, but said he would continue to have some involvement in that state. MacDowell described the NC project as "a disaster" beset by questionable scientific work and cost overruns by CNSI, under Ebenhack's leadership.

To some degree, however, Ebenhack might be a "scapegoat" to take the fall for his superiors at CNSI, MacDowell said. In NC CNSI's cost estimates for studying and licensing a site have skyrocketed from \$21 million to \$90 million since 1989, which does not include a reported \$23 million spent thus far by the state. Latshaw questioned why CNSI pulled Newcomb out of PA at a time when the company's cost increases here are under investigation. Newcomb was in charge of the program. In PA, an audit shows that CNSI already has spent the \$31-to-\$33 million allocated to site and license a dump, and now is requesting an additional \$50 to \$90 million from the taxpayers.

## **PENNSYLVANIA SEEKS VOLUNTEER TO HOST NUCLEAR DUMP**

Governor Tom Ridge and James Seif, secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), are hoping that a Pennsylvania community will step forward and agree to accept a nuclear dump. State officials say they will court civic groups and elected officials in hopes of finding a municipality willing to at least consider hosting a dump. DEP officials plan to spend \$6 million to finance the marketing program. DEP claims that fees, tax breaks, and revenue from dumping nuclear waste will generate about \$1 billion for the host community during the facility's 30-year lifetime. Additionally, DEP would provide the volunteer community with independent monitoring of air, water, and soil within three miles of the site, and free health monitoring for birth defects and cancer within five miles of the site.

Although the dump would officially be a low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) dump, some of the nuclear waste deposited in the dump will remain radioactive for thousands of years. (A recent DEP letter assured the nuclear industry that the dump site will accept carbon-14, which has a half-life of 5,730 years. The nuclear industry had been concerned that Pennsylvania might ban radionuclides whose half-lives are greater than a certain number of years, as has been suggested at some of the other regional LLRW dumps). At least 90 percent of the radioactivity present in the dump will come from the nuclear power industry.

DEP is hoping that its aggressive marketing campaign will speed the siting of a dump site, which is already four years behind schedule. Recently, the House Legislative Budget and Finance Committee learned that CNSI, the company hired to find and build the site, will need another five years and \$55 to \$90 million to find a dump site. CNSI's original contract called for a site to be found in four years at a cost of \$30 million.

In addition to financial problems, there is growing opposition to a dump site. For example, when elected officials in Hellam Township, York County expressed an interest in receiving information about becoming a volunteer site, local citizens organized to oppose the dump. Their efforts eventually resulted in the passage of a local ordinance that would make it almost impossible for Chem-Nuclear to site a dump in the township.

Despite citizen opposition, state officials are convinced that they can defuse concerns about radioactive wastes. "There is no question in my mind that the risks of this facility are truly minimal," said William Dornsife, director of DEP's Bureau of Radiation Protection. "You have to postulate an incredible scenario ... to get a dose that exceeds natural background radiation."

Defusing concerns about radioactive wastes may be more difficult than DEP officials will admit. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), "no studies have been conducted of the overall environmental effects of the one existing and 11 planned disposal facilities for commercially generated low-level waste." It is known, however, that four of the six original low-level waste sites suffered environmental problems and one (Maxey Flats in Kentucky) is on the Superfund toxic site cleanup list.

Eric Epstein, a spokesperson for TMIA, said DEP's proposal will put communities in the position of weighing short-term economic gains against long-term health risks. "There is something fundamentally wrong when you are trying to locate a facility of any type and you are unable to do so without economic blackmail. If you let it be sited on its merits, there shouldn't be the need to economically bribe a community to become a host site."

## **MEANWHILE, AT CHERNOBYL ...**

On July 5, Reuter reported that the concrete tomb at Chernobyl needs repairs and eventually will need to be replaced by a second sarcophagus. A French team will present designs for a the new tomb next week. A spokesman for Chernobyl said that steel support pillars could collapse and an earthquake could flatten the structure along with the tons of nuclear fuel still trapped inside.

On July 9, UPI reported that mutant mice are surviving at Chernobyl. Researchers from the University of Georgia's Savannah River Ecology Laboratory said mutations which occurred would have taken 10 million years to occur naturally. Usually genetic damage signals a cell to die or enlists repair enzymes to restore the genetic code. Problems arise when genetic mistakes aren't fixed and persist as mutations. Such genetic errors lead to birth defects or cancer.

While Chernobyl mice don't look like mutants they have many breaks in their DNA. The scientists captured five field mice from the Chernobyl area and compared their DNA with the DNA of five field mice from outside the area. The scientists then examined a gene called cytochrome B that, because it is passed directly from mother to offspring and changes slowly, is

considered a genetic clock.

The field mice from outside the irradiated area had essentially the same cytochrome B gene. But in the Chernobyl mice the gene sequences as well as their proteins were all different. In fact, the difference in the genes between normal mice and the Chernobyl mice was greater than that found between mice and rats, species that diverged some 15 million years ago.

## **ELECTRIC UTILITIES ATTACK RENEWABLE ENERGY, ENERGY EFFICIENCY TECHNOLOGIES**

The future of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies is facing a serious threat as a result of a concerted effort by electric utilities to repeal two key federal laws, according to a growing coalition of environmental, public interest, and renewable energy groups.

The two federal laws targeted for repeal by utilities are the Public Utility Holding Company Act (PUHCA) and the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA). If these laws are repealed, the resulting increased monopoly power of electric utilities would represent a grave threat to the future of sustainable energy in the U.S., according to coalition leaders.

PUHCA was passed to force the massive holding companies that controlled the U.S. electric industry in the 1920s and 1930s to be more accountable to local citizens and government. Today, PUHCA provides support to the efforts of environmental and consumer advocates by promoting local control and accountability.

PURPA requires wholesale power sales between utilities and independent power producers known as "qualifying facilities." PURPA has been largely responsible for the rise of competition in electricity generation and of the renewable power industry, according to Jim Sims, a spokesperson for the Geothermal Energy Association. PURPA has been the single most important driving force in encouraging the cost-effective development of America's clean, secure, and domestic energy sources. "Renewable energy technologies are beginning to make huge strides forward toward commercial realization. Now is not the time to diminish that effort by retreating from competition and granting more abusive monopoly power to utilities," Sims added.

According to David Lapp of the Environmental Action Foundation, the repeal of PUHCA would allow utilities to move key operations into holding company subsidiaries that are beyond the reach of regulators. Repeal would allow local monopoly franchises to be owned by a company that had little interest in local consumer and environmental goals. Lapp said that, "as long as utilities continue to own monopolies in distribution, transmission, information, metering, billing, and energy efficient services, then federal protections against anti-competitive, anti-consumer, and anti-environmental behavior -- measures like the PUHCA -- remain necessary."

## **HOUSE VOTES TO GUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS**

On July 18, the House of Representatives voted to eliminate funding for the Department of Energy's (DOE) building codes and energy efficiency standards programs. On an amendment offered by Representative Mike Parker (D-MS), the House voted 261-165 to cut \$12.8 million from DOE's codes and standards program.

Energy efficiency standards for appliances, authorized first under the National Appliance Conservation Act in 1978 and then expanded as part of the Energy Policy Act of 1992, provide for the DOE to set minimum levels of efficiency for a wide range of products, including refrigerators, washing machines, hot water heaters, air conditioning systems, lighting systems, ovens and small electric motors. Efficiency standards set by DOE generate a \$1,000 return in energy savings for every \$1 spent by the federal government.

Appliance efficiency standards adopted to date will save consumers \$132 billion net over the life of the products covered and avoid the need for 58,000 Megawatts (MW) of new capacity, or the equivalent of more than 100 nuclear or coal-fired plants. Freezing ongoing and future rulemakings could cost consumers over \$100 billion in lost energy savings over the next 30 years and create the need for an additional 37,300 MW of new capacity, or the equivalent of 75 coal or nuclear plants by the year 2015.

The Parker amendment also stops DOE from continuing to work with states on upgrading building codes to ensure that builders utilize energy efficiency measures in new construction that are cost-effective on a lifecycle basis, rather than constructing buildings with the lowest first cost.

"Energy efficiency is the most cost-effective and environmentally benign way to reduce our reliance on dirty and dangerous energy sources," said Bill Magavern, Director of Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project. "Members who voted for the Parker amendment have sentenced consumers to higher energy bills and dirtier air. In this case, regulations providing economic and environmental benefits at little cost have been singled out for no good reason. Only a handful of companies benefit from such an ill-conceived proposal."

## **NRC HAS FAILED TO CLEAN UP RADIOACTIVE SITES**

The NRC's much-heralded Site Decommissioning Management Plan (SDMP) -- the agency's effort to clean up potentially hundreds of radioactively-contaminated commercial nuclear sites across the country -- is failing, according to a new report from the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO).

Although the NRC began its program in 1990, GAO found that through December 1994, NRC contractors had reviewed only about 75% of the estimated 38,500 terminated nuclear licenses in question. Of those, 22 were found to exceed NRC guidelines for radioactive contamination, while another 895 sites had supplied documentation so inadequate that it was impossible to assess contamination levels.

The NRC does not plan to complete review of the remaining 9500 terminated licenses in question until 1996, and, according to the GAO, "it will take several additional years to review the contractor's work and conduct inspections that may be needed to assess contamination at the sites."

In 1993, the NRC said that 11 of the 52 sites placed on the SDMP would be cleaned by April 1994. In fact, only three were cleaned up. The SDMP currently contains a list of 50 sites; thirty of these are contaminated with large amounts of radioactive waste, with some sites having as much as 10 million cubic feet of contaminated soil.

According to the Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS), the failure of the SDMP program and the NRC's inability to compel clean up of contaminated sites is best seen not as a failure of the NRC -- which has allocated considerable resources to the effort. Rather, it is an inevitable reality of the nuclear age. It is expensive and difficult, perhaps even impossible, to fully clean the dangerous garbage generated so foolishly and stored so haphazardly. And with more than 21,000 active sites across the county not even included in the GAO study, the problem is likely to grow far worse before it gets better.

## **NUCLEAR INDUSTRY INSPECTOR QUILTS**

A top nuclear industry engineer, under contract with the NRC to review Individual Plant Examination (IPE) submittals, has quit performing reviews and blasted the review process. In a

March 17, 1995, memo to the NRC, John Darby, an engineer with 19 years of experience in the nuclear industry, wrote that he has been told by NRC staffers not to "look so hard and don't ask so much."

The NRC's IPE program is an effort to determine, on a reactor-specific basis, the possibilities for serious accidents. Armed with that information, the NRC and utilities can then address any outstanding reactor-specific issues. Many important generic safety issues, such as the reliability of GE Mark I containments, have been folded into the IPE process.

Darby's memo suggests that the IPE process will not achieve the desired results. According to the memo, "I am not allowed to visit the plants whose submittal I am evaluating. It is impossible for me to perform a quality review of a detailed study of a plant without visiting the plant. For example, I am tasked to review the analysis of internal flooding in the IPE, but without visiting the plant I cannot determine where the water from a leak goes and what equipment is impacted." Darby's memo concluded that "the review process being used by the NRC for the IPEs is insufficient to provide a technically-supportable basis for the use of risk-based regulations."

## **THE EFMR MONITORING GROUP AT THREE MILE ISLAND**

The EFMR Monitoring Group at TMI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that monitors radiation trends in the TMI area. The Group was formed as a result of a settlement between Eric Epstein and GPU Nuclear.

EFMR owns 60 Radalert monitors which measure beta and gamma radiation; these monitors are deployed at 50 stations in eight Pennsylvania counties around the TMI nuclear reactor station. There are two additional Radalert stations in Maryland. EFMR has five low-volume air samplers installed on the East and West shores of TMI. The Group also enjoys on-line access to the GPU Reuter-Stokes gamma monitoring system as well as information from a remote temperature detector installed at the base of the TMI-2 reactor vessel.

If you wish to receive the EFMR Monitor, contact Eric Epstein, Coordinator, EFMR Monitoring Group, 2308 Brandywine Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17110 or call (717) 541-1101. The Group's internet e-mail address is [ee Epstein@igc.apc.org](mailto:ee Epstein@igc.apc.org). There is no cost for the newsletter.

## **NRC PROPOSES TO REDUCE OFFSITE MONITORING**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is requesting public comments on its plan to reduce the amount of offsite monitoring around selected nuclear facilities. Currently, 27 States are under contract with the NRC to conduct the monitoring. The NRC will evaluate the public comments and make a decision this year on its plan to reduce the amount of monitoring work done by the States in 1996.

The 27 States have been provided funding under cooperative agreements, since the mid-1970s, to collect and analyze samples taken periodically from the air, water, soil and food products (milk and food crops) around the selected licensed facilities. Results of the sample analyses are compared by the States with similar analyses made by the respective nuclear facility. This information is then sent to the NRC where it is used as a supplemental tool in cross-checking the performance of environmental monitoring programs conducted by the nuclear facility.

Licensees are under strict NRC requirements to monitor and control radioactive materials released to the air, water and ground around their facilities. The NRC inspects and reviews licenses conformance with the requirements on a regular basis.

Under the new proposal, the NRC will no longer contract with the States to sample and analyze

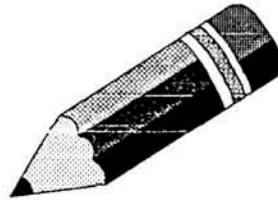
the air, water, and ground for radiation levels. The States will continue, however, to participate in a NRC program that uses a network of small devices called thermoluminescent dosimeters (TLDs). The devices provide continuous measurement of radiation levels on the air in areas around selected nuclear facilities.

## TMI TEST CASES SET FOR COURT

In early May, 1995, Judge Sylvia Rambo, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, issued a non-negotiable trial schedule for a handful of the approximately 2,000 claims filed by residents who lived near TMI at the time of the 1979 accident.

“For a myriad of reasons, ranging from the complexity of the legal issues presented to the dilatory tactics of the parties involved in the captioned action, litigation on the approved test cases has progressed at a painfully slow pace. With the goal of seeing the initial rounds of this litigation completed before the turn of the century, the court has composed the attached non-negotiable case management schedule,” Rambo wrote.

Under the schedule, all depositions from defendants, including GPUN, must be completed by September 9, 1995. Briefs on motions to dismiss the claims must be filed by April 8, 1996. In addition to the health-related lawsuits covered by Judge Rambo’s order, there are 72 tourism-related lawsuits claiming that the accident devastated businesses. Judge Rambo’s order does not cover the loss-of-business claims.



## NEWS NOTES

☞ The Central Pennsylvania Speakers’ Bureau of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is currently seeking opportunities to address civic organizations, church groups, and other community groups that would like to learn more about how they can “Save the Bay.” Speakers are equipped with videos, photographs and slides, posters, and “how-to” resources designed to educate and activate any audience. For more information, call Melinda Downey in the Pennsylvania office (717) 234-5550.

☞ Recent publications we heard about:

*The Petkau Effect: The Devastating Effect of Nuclear Radiation on Human Health and the Environment*, by Ralph Graeb. New revised 1995 edition, updated foreword and postscript. Offers a cogent look at the unexpectedly severe consequences of atomic energy for humanity and the environment. Cost \$14.95 plus \$2.00 postage. To order, call 1-800-626-4848.

*Dioxin: The Orange Resource Book* (1995, WD Press, St. Louis). Provides activists with information they need to oppose toxics in their communities. Stories of ongoing struggles describe organizing tactics developed by authors, dead ends which communities must avoid, and tricks used by corporate polluters and their allies in government. Cost \$7.00 from Gateway Green Alliance, P.O. Box 8094, St. Louis, MO 63156.

☞ TMIA has purchased the following books and will loan them to members:

*Saving the Planet: How to Shape an Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy* and  
*Power Surge: Guide to the Coming Energy Revolution*

Call the office (717-233-7897) to make arrangements for a loan.