Three Mile Island Alert

The Newsletter of Three Mile Island Alert May 1998

Three Mile Island Slips in Engineering SALP Rating

from a March 16, 1998, Inside NRC article

Engineering at GPU Nuclear's Three Mile Island-1 (TMI) slipped from a Category 2 rating to a low Category 3, according to the latest NRC systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) report. Plant operations and maintenance kept their Category 1 scores while plant support maintained a Category 2 rating.

NRC Region 1 Administrator Hubert Miller said in a letter to the utility that the unit's overall performance was "mixed." Concerning engineering, Miller stated that this was "the second consecutive assessment in which a decline was noted, indicating that previous efforts to improve performance in that area were not effective. Corrective action programs, while improved, were not fully effective in achieving timely resolution of some problems."

According to Nucleonics Week, TMI-1, an 871-MW Babcock & Wilcox PWR, had an annual gross capacity factor of 88.73% in 1995. The annual gross capacity was 98.17% in 1996 and 80.68% a year later.

NRC Issues Notice of Violation but No Civil Penalty to TMI

from a January 1, 1998, Nucleonics Week article, a January 28, 1998, NRC press release, and a February 2, 1998, Inside NRC article

Despite four incidents at Three Mile Island-1 involving personnel errors, including one involving contamination and another the type of valve that stuck open and led to the Three Mile Island-2 accident in 1979, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a Notice of Violation -- but not a civil penalty -- against GPU Nuclear Corporation..

The employee contamination occurred when the fuel transfer canal was drained and cleaned. The reactor vessel head seal plate was lifted and parked. Hot particles were found and cleaned but a hot particle area was not formally established nor was radiation control supervision notified. Subsequently, two hot particles were found on a worker's face, resulting in a dose of 14 rem to the skin and 50 millirem whole body. The annual NRC limits are 50 rem to the skin and 5 rem whole body. The NRC faulted the company for failing to conduct detailed radiation surveys and control the spread of radioactive particles.

In the valve incident, a pressurizer power-operated relief valve (PORV) was left shut and inoperable for nearly two years at TMI-1 due to a wiring error and operators' failure to conduct a post-maintenance test. The agency had classified the violation as Severity Level III.

The company said the valve remained closed due to a wiring error and operators' failure to conduct a post-maintenance test. The PORV was left inoperable from the time of a refueling and maintenance outage that ended in October 1995 until the most recent such outage last September.

The two other incidents were actions by an operator which resulted in uncontrolled spill of water from the control rod drive mechanism vents and the failure to lock a hatch in a high-radiation area.

GPU Nuclear spokeswoman Laura Karinch blamed bad communications for the uncontrolled water spill. She said employees are now aware that it is inappropriate procedure to perform significant plant evolutions while the shift turnover is in progress. At the time of the incident, company tasks and individual accountabilities were not made clear to workers.

Poor communication was also the root cause of the hatch being

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Three Mile Island Alert

Three Mile Island Alert (TMIA) is a non-profit citizens' organization dedicated to the promotion of safe-energy alternatives to nuclear power, especially the Three Mile Island nuclear plant.

Formed in 1977 after the construction and licensing of TMI Unit-1 and the construction of the infamous Unit-2, TMIA is the largest and oldest safe-energy group in central Pennsylvania.

TMIA members interested in specific aspects of nuclear power are encouraged to join one of TMIA's committees. These committees include:

- Radiation Monitoring
- Low-level Radioactive Waste
- Health Effects of TMI
- Nuclear Plant Security

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$55,000 Fine Against Susquehanna Plant

from a January 12, 1998, NRC press release

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a $55,000 fine against the operator of the Susquehanna nuclear power plant for a violation of agency requirements involving a misaligned emergency diesel generator at the facility. Susquehanna, which is equipped with two reactors, is located in Berwick, in northeastern Pennsylvania. It is owned and operated by PP&L Inc.

A predecisional enforcement conference was held on December 16 at the NRC Region 1 office in King of Prussia, Pa., to discuss the infraction.

Susquehanna has five emergency diesel generators. In the event of a loss of power to the site, the generators would be called upon to operate safety-related systems and safely shut down the plant.

Last July 11, an NRC inspector found that the load limit setting on one of the generators had been positioned at approximately 35 percent, when it should have remained at 100 percent. The misalignment, which was subsequently determined to have occurred sometime between June 16 and July 11, could have resulted in the generator not starting within the required time and not being able to provide sufficient emergency backup power during an accident. Furthermore, the operation of the generator at a lower-than-normal speed could have damaged emergency core cooling system motors.

PP&L investigated the misalignment but was unable to determine the cause, though the utility did not rule out that it may have been the result of a work sequence error, inadvertent human interaction or tampering. The company has since taken steps to prevent a recurrence, including the installation of a protective cover over the controls, known as the Woodward governor.

The NRC staff has found that PP&L committed a violation by failing to establish adequate controls for the generator's alignment.

In a letter to PP&L announcing the enforcement action, NRC Region 1 Administrator Hubert J. Miller said that the failure caused "important safety-related equipment to be inoperable for an indeterminate period, thus degrading the plant's capability to respond to accidents."

"Further, the NRC is concerned that you failed to implement effective controls for the alignment of the Woodward governor controls despite the fact that multiple events involving the functioning of the Woodward governors have been identified in the industry between 1985 and the present," including three at Susquehanna, Mr. Miller wrote. "Also, the NRC is concerned that your investigation of the event could not preclude tampering as a cause and that the investigations revealed at least two other recent instances of unexplained misalignment of out-of-service EDGs (emergency diesel generators) similar to the misalignment of the 'A' EDG."

The administrator added that it appeared that personnel performance issues were persisting at the plant, and that there was an "adverse trend in equipment status control events."

Tritium Release at Oyster Creek Under Investigation

from an April, 1998 Nuclear News article

Small traces of the radioisotope tritium being released into the atmosphere at Oyster Creek nuclear power plant are being investigated by company personnel. Tritium is a radioactive isotope that naturally occurs in the environment wherever there is water, and is also produced as a result of operating a nuclear reactor.

The releases at Oyster Creek are nonthreatening to residents or the environment, according to GPU Nuclear, Inc., operators of the plant.

An Oyster Creek employee discovered recently that occasional wisps of steam from isolation condensers are carrying the tritium as the plant is operating. The isolation condensers serve as large heat exchangers that are used to reduce pressure in the plant's General Electric boiling water reactor.

Radiation produced by tritium is so weak that radiation monitors do not detect it, and it is instead monitored through laboratory analysis. According to GPU Nuclear, the maximum radiation dose an individual would have received in 1997 from the release of tritium from the isolation condensers at Oyster Creek is about 0.04 millirem, which is equivalent to spending less than a day at the beach.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection have been updated on the status of the monitoring.

PA Nuclear Dump Site Opposed

from a March 5, 1998, Associated Press article

Not in my backyard, say residents of Athens Township, Crawford County, who don't want a low-level nuclear waste dump.

Officials of Chem-Nuclear, the company contracted by Pennsylvania to build a nuclear dump in the state, have spoken to township supervisors about the possibility of locating the dump there. The facility will be safe and bring jobs and tax relief to its neighbors, the company has said.

Township supervisors assured a crowd of at least 100 people Tuesday night that they will sign a resolution against the dump if their solicitor approves the resolution. The resolution states that the supervisors will not negotiate for a nuclear waste dump or volunteer any township land for such a facility.

Also Tuesday, county commissioners declined to sign such a resolution, saying municipalities should make the decision.

Chem-Nuclear has been unsuccessfully searching for years for 50 acres on which to put the dump, but no community has volunteered. The company hopes to find a site by the end of the year.

Athens Township, southeast of Erie, has a population of 700 on about 27 square miles.

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unlocked in a high radiation area. "Despite the fact that a camera monitored the area, the contractor near the site was not supposed to leave the area without putting a bar back over the hatch. He apparently did not know that," Karinch said.

Overall, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert Miller said there was some "gross performance" that should not be happening with the experienced work force at TMI. Neil Sheehan, a spokesman for NRC, said the agency believes, for example, that in the hot particle incident, "work should have stopped. Contamination took place and they continued to do the work. The work should have been suspended."

The NRC claims that the principal factor in the decision not to fine GPU was that under the NRC's enforcement policy, the utility was credited for efforts to identify the problems and take prompt and comprehensive corrective actions.

GPUN spokeswoman Laura Karinch said in reaction to the NRC decision that GPUN "had identified the issues all along and we had communicated openly about them and our corrective actions to the NRC. We were very thorough."

EPA Proposes to Recycle, Refabricate, and Reuse Radioactively Contaminated Scrap Metal in Unlabeled Consumer Products

from a recent Pennsylvania Sierra Club Newsletter
by Dr. Judith Johnsrud, Director of the Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under pressure from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Department of Energy (DOE), and the nuclear power industry, is preparing to set standards for public exposures to radioactivity in consumer products made from scrap metals. As nuclear waste disposal costs continue to soar, the commercial nuclear industry and DOE are demanding deregulation of massive amounts of radioactively contaminated scrap metal ("RSM") from nuclear power plants, nuclear weapons production facilities, and other nuclear industry facilities. Generators of contaminated equipment and components want to sell off more of their wastes as scrap metal to be recycled into consumer goods of all kinds, as is now allowed in Europe and elsewhere.

The radioactive scrap would be smelted with uncontaminated metals, then refabricated into a host of consumer products. These could include building materials, automobile bodies and parts, tools, kitchen equipment (e.g., cast iron frying pans), furniture, possibly children's toys, jewelry, coins. Major metals include carbon steel, nickel, and copper, plus numerous other metals.

Each object could contain a mix of radionuclides, with a dose standard set for each radionuclide, based on a proposed release level of one picocurie per gram of scrap metal for each radionuclide. Members of the public come into contact with many metal objects every day, and would encounter many such small exposures, but would have no way to detect them, no way to measure the amount of each of the doses, and no way to add up the total amount of these numerous radiation exposures. These doses from the radioactive metal products will be in addition to the naturally-occurring background radiation we all receive and to all other exposures allowed from nuclear facilities and workplaces, plus doses from medical diagnosis and treatment and from continuing fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests 40-50 years ago.

The National Academy of Science concluded in 1990 that there is no evidence to contradict the hypothesis of a linear relationship between dose and response. This means that there is no safe dose; that there is a risk of mutational effect and consequent adverse health effects from all exposures to ionizing radiation, including those from natural background sources.

As nuclear plants begin to be decommissioned, storage and disposal costs of "low-level" radioactive wastes (LLRW) are rising, and huge volumes of "hot" metals will accumulate. The nuclear industry is seeking the least cost solution to waste disposition.

Now EPA is considering what level of exposures to permit from the recycling of much of the equipment, piping, and other metal components that have volumetric contamination, too. Increasingly, EPA has received complaints from scrap dealers, steel mills that smelt scrap metals, and refabrication facilities that they are receiving "hot" scrap -- and having to pay for cleanup when their scrap yards and factories become contaminated. In addition, the NRC has now approved regulations for international transboundary trade in radioactive materials and wastes. The DOE, in its "environmental remediation" program for cleanup of its atomic bomb plants, is generating enormous amounts of scrap metal. NRC licensees and DOE want to sell the stuff into the free market economy, without warnings or labels.

More than 1.6 million tons of scrap metal are currently in storage, awaiting the EPA green light for recycling. There is far more to come when nuclear reactors are decommissioned in the next two or three decades. Moreover, the EPA analysis looked at only 11 DOE sites (of at least 85) and 123 power reactors of some 22,000 NRC and Agreement State licensees.

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EPA is considering dose limits for the "Reasonably Maximally Exposed Individual" member of the public, ranging between 0.1 millirem per year and 15.0 millirem per year. These doses, received from many metal sources, will be in addition to the naturally-occurring background level of approximately 100 millirem per year, plus other sources of exposure. The EPA decision will consider cost savings for the generators of the scrap metal (from zero to $1.7 billion) and the resultant additional cases of cancer (estimated to range from 6 to 29 additional cancer cases expected in the next 1000 years).

EPA had issued its preliminary Draft Economic Analysis and Technical Support Reports on recycling and reuse of scrap metal for comment from "Interested Stakeholders." Comments were due January 31st, 1998, but it is very important that you keep writing, anyway. You may request the documents from the EPA Center for Cleanup and Reuse, Radiation Protection Division, Office of Air and Radiation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street SW, Washington, DC 20460. Ask for copies of "Radiation Protection Standards for Scrap Metal: Preliminary Cost-Benefit Analysis" and the three volumes of Technical Support Documents, "Evaluation of the Potential for Recycling of Scrap Metals from Nuclear Facilities."

Peco Looks to a Nuclear Future

from an April 17, 1998, Megawatt Daily article

Peco Energy believes nuclear power will fuel its future growth.

In two speeches this week, Peco Chair and CEO Corbin McNeill cautioned that banking on nuclear power is not without risk, but that he is secure in the company's track record of performance, combined with standardized regulatory processes, will lead to safe, efficient operation of nuclear facilities.

"Nuclear power is very attractive and a highly competitive source of generation," McNeill said, adding that Peco's nuclear plants in Pennsylvania and New Jersey generate electricity for as little as 1.43 cents/kWh. "So we will couple our national footprint in generation with our capabilities as a wholesale marketer of power. From this emerges a profitable growth strategy."

Peco owns the two-unit Limerick nuclear plant, co-owns the two-unit Peach Bottom plant and co-owns the two-unit Salem plant. When all six units are running at full capacity, nuclear power can meet 60% of the utility's electricity needs, Jones said.

Nuclear power generation is "one of three main business strategies of ours going in to deregulation," Jones said, mentioning bulk power marketing and managing the energy needs of large industrial customers as the other two.

While many utilities are selling off their fossil-fueled and hydroelectric generation assets and reconsidering the viability of their nuclear plants, Peco is one of a handful of utilities counting on nuclear power. Duke Energy and Entergy are looking to expand their nuclear portfolios and Baltimore Gas & Electric earlier this month became the first utility to begin the license renewal process of a nuclear facility.

Last September, Peco formed an alliance with British Energy, whose eight nuclear plants provide 21% of Britain's electricity. The goal of the alliance, called AmerGen Energy, is to acquire, own and operate generation facilities, including nuclear plants, in the United States.

AmerGen is in discussions with the owners of several nuclear plants, Jones said, declining to give details.

GPU, which operates the Three Mile Island and Oyster Creek nuclear plants in Pennsylvania, has publicly stated it wants to sell them, along with all of its other generation assets. On Wednesday, GPU sent information about the 5,350 MW of fossil-fueled and hydro capacity it is auctioning to qualified bidders. Jones said Peco is not commenting on whether it is looking at GPU's facilities.

In his comments, McNeill said Peco's success depends in part on the willingness of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to reform its regulatory requirements. "Like it or not, we're about to enter the fast-moving, competitive electric generation business of the 21st century," McNeill said. "We can't keep dragging behind us the heavy weight of 1970-era prescriptive regulation."

Zion Permanent Closure Follows INPO Bust

from a January 16, 1998, NIRS press release

Commonwealth Edison announced yesterday the permanent shutdown of its two unit Westinghouse Zion nuclear generating station.

ComEd said that it will write off the unrecoverable cost of the reactors from stockholdings, approximately $515 million or $2.38 per share. The announcement precedes the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Periodic Briefing on Operating Reactors and Material Facilities (a.k.a. "Watch List") scheduled for January 21, 1998. The Illinois based utility had 6 of its 12 reactors on the 1997 Watchlist including the Zion reactors.

ComEd's decision to close Zion follows the release of a scathing industry internal report by the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) in late November, 1997. The report criticized the nuclear utility for consistently failing to remedy problems, for failing to inform employees who their supervisor was, for cycling 104 different managers through the utility's top 30 nuclear positions during the past four and a half years, and for promoting short term economics over nuclear safety. INPO was organized by the nuclear industry as the "shadow" regulator and trouble shooter following the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, recognizing that the industry could not afford another TMI. Unlike the NRC, INPO findings and reports are held back from public disclosure as industry trade secret information.

Federal Government Won't Be Able to Keep Promise on Waste Disposal

from a January 30, 1998, Associated Press article

It was a promise made 16 years ago. By Feb. 1, 1998, the government would find a place to safely store the thousands of tons of highly radioactive waste generated by civilian power plants. At midnight Saturday the deadline passes. And there won't be any trucks hauling wastes from power reactors -- only more legal sparring over what has become the nuclear industry's most perplexing problem.

A federal court last November reaffirmed that the Energy Department, which has collected billions of dollars from electricity users to build a waste burial site, has an obligation to accept the used reactor fuel rods that remain deadly for thousands of years.

And, the court declared, the government can't hide behind the excuse that it has no place to put it. Since then, utilities and department officials have dueled over what steps should be taken next. "Obviously it's impossible for us to meet this (obligation)," Deputy Energy Secretary Elizabeth Moller said recently when asked about the dilemma. With no permanent burial site -- or even temporary warehouse -- available, department officials have offered to help pay for continued storage at reactor sites.

That's unacceptable, argue the reactor operators. "What the utilities want is for the Energy Department to take their spent fuel, and they're simply not willing to do that," said Jay Silberg, an attorney representing 36 reactor operators who have asked the courts to require the wastes be taken to a government facility.

More than 40,000 tons of used reactor fuel have piled up at 71 civilian nuclear power plants in 34 states, with the amount growing every year. Reactor storage pools are filling up, and 10 plants have had to put fuel in dry-cask storage, which has been expensive and in some cases locally controversial.

"The Energy Department's handling of this matter is inexcusable," said Joe Colvin, president of the Nuclear Energy Institute, the industry's trade group. He said utility customers already have paid nearly $14 billion into a federal fund to develop a centralized waste storage facility, but so far not even a site has been found.

But others argue that the utility industry is exaggerating the urgency, and some nuclear critics maintain the industry should take care of its own waste.

"It's one of the biggest industrial bailouts ever," argues Michael Mariotte of the Nuclear Information and Resources Service, an anti-nuclear advocacy group. He said a central storage facility would mean thousands of nuclear waste shipments crisscrossing the country by truck and rail, posing increased

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safety hazards.

Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., whose state has been talked of as the most likely long-term storage place for the waste, maintains that even if the government should eventually take the material, there is no need for a "mad rush" to transport it. "If it's so safe, leave it where it is," he argues.

But utility executive say it's a matter of fairness and of government's keeping its word since Congress in 1982 assured the industry that the Energy Department would take the spent reactor fuel, which will remain highly radioactive for thousands of years. Industry officials say the fuel pools at reactor sites never were meant for long-term storage. And putting the fuel rods into metal casks and concrete bunkers will be expensive and foment local opposition to the power plants themselves.

Both the Senate and House have passed legislation that would require the government to build a temporary warehouse for the waste in Nevada until a permanent burial site can be located and built. But the measure, which would require the first shipments in 2003, faces an almost certain veto by President Clinton if it passes Congress. The administration has opposed a temporary storage site because, officials say, that would shift efforts away from developing a permanent repository.

Sweden Committed to Phasing out its Nuclear Reactors

from a February 3, 1998, Agence France Presse article

Sweden is preparing to close down two nuclear reactors at the Barsebaeck power plant in southern Sweden in the first step toward a total phase-out of nuclear power amid fierce protests from the opposition, industry, unions, and the public.

Barsebaeck 1 is to be shut down by July 1 this year, and Barsebaeck 2 is to close by July 1, 2001, provided that the loss of energy (six percent of the electricity produced in Sweden) can be adequately compensated for. But opponents argue that prematurely abolishing safe and functioning energy sources is a waste of money and would contribute to unemployment. They stress that no environmental alternative energy sources have been found.

The Social Democratic government has said it will "respect the will of the people" who called for a total nuclear phase-out by 2010. Although the 2010 deadline has been officially abandoned, it remains a symbolic target.

The opposition Conservative and Liberal parties have accused the minority Social Democrats of striking a deal with the Centrist party in order to maintain its hold on power, instead of considering the country's energy needs.

The agrarian Centrist party supports the government on crucial issues in parliament, and had threatened to withdraw its support if the government did not close one of the Barsebaeck reactors before the September 20 legislative elections.

The Conservatives, headed by former prime minister Carl Bildt, have said they would revoke the law if they come to power in the elections.

The private owner of the Barsebaeck plant, the Swedish electricity group Sydkraft, is also vehemently opposed to the closure, arguing that the dismantling would cost some 20 billion kronor (2.5 billion dollars). Sydkraft believes the government should begin its phase-out program by dismantling the reactors operated by the state-owned group Vattenfall.

Meanwhile, the heads of some of Sweden's largest companies -- Ericsson, Volvo and ABB to name a few -- do not believe that the energy alternatives (wind power, biofuels) would be sufficient to supply the country's energy needs. Hydro power, which produces 38 percent of Sweden's electricity, cannot be expanded further due to a law protecting Sweden's rivers.

Swedish unions are concerned about the employment effects of closing down the nuclear power plants, with unemployment currently at 11 percent.

Neither is the general public in favor of decommissioning. A recent poll showed that 58 percent of Swedes would like to continue the use of nuclear power, while only 20 percent are opposed.

Local Governments Monitoring Nuclear Plants Themselves

from a December 19, 1997, Hartford Courant article
By Gary Libow

It took Haddam officials a quarter of a century to discover that groundwater at the Connecticut Yankee nuclear power plant had been tainted by a nuclear fission byproduct.

Now, awakening from decades of self-imposed slumber, Haddam has told its new health director to conduct its own well testing and has hired a consultant to monitor plant decommissioning and off-site contamination issues.

Tritium, a health threat when ingested and inhaled in large doses, remained in wells at Connecticut Yankee from the 1970s into the early 1990s, according to annual figures provided to federal regulators. About the same time, the plant began serving bottled water to its employees.

But Dr. John Korab, the town's part-time health director from 1971 until this fall, said he was never made aware of the contamination. Several other past and present town leaders said the same.

Northeast Utilities, the plant's principal owner, said the information was included in annual reports filed with the town, but no copy of any year's report is on file in town hall. Neither is an aquifer map of the area that would show a resident whether he or she shares the same groundwater.

"Connecticut Yankee had carte blanche," said Haddam's newly elected first selectman, Keith Ainsworth. "The town never questioned them. ... All the things they are uncovering now. Where was that information?"

Local governments in Connecticut and elsewhere, which have long ceded oversight of nuclear plants to federal and state authorities, are growing increasingly skeptical and are taking steps of their own to monitor the plants.

In Waterford, where the town recently learned that fill from the Millstone nuclear power plants makes up part of the town's ballfield complex, similar steps are being taken. The town is conducting its own radiation tests of the ballfield dirt -- even though the state has found the earth to be clean.

David Lochbaum, a nuclear engineer with the Washington, D.C.- based watchdog group Union of Concerned Scientists, said municipal oversight, though not mandated, is an important supplement to federal and state regulation. "It flushes out the issues," said Lochbaum.

The influence of county and municipal governments is based almost entirely on lobbying and diligence, exerting political pressure and doing their homework. The law grants regulatory power largely to the federal government, with some duties shouldered by the states.

The Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry organization based in Washington, notes that the industry is one of the most regulated in the country. "Regulatory requirements became progressively more detailed and prescriptive. New requirements were often layered on top of old ones, without weeding out duplication and inconsistencies," according to the institute. Excessive regulation, it contends, does not translate into better or safer performance.

Waterford officials were taken by surprise this year by allegations that Millstone illegally dumped hydrazine, a cancer-causing chemical, into a prohibited area of Niantic Bay, and by unsafe practices that drew a record $2 million federal fine.

Waterford First Selectman Thomas Sheridan acknowledged that the town long deferred to the state and the NRC for oversight. He said he still relies heavily on town officials who work at the Millstone plants as his primary source of information.

"Were we ever unsafe? I don't think so. [But] the risk factor was increasing," Sheridan said.

Of course, "Hindsight is easy," said Haddam's Ainsworth, who is also an

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environmental lawyer.

With it, Haddam officials surely would have tried to monitor the removal of Connecticut Yankee fill and thousands of concrete blocks to residences, a fairground and a day-care center. In one location, the fill was contaminated with low levels of cobalt-60; more than 100 concrete blocks removed from the plant in the 1970s also tested positive for radiation.

Now, Ainsworth has instructed Dr. Arthur Blake, the newly appointed health director, to test wells for residents worried about drinking-water quality. Ainsworth said the town's clout rests in the pressure it can exert at the state and federal levels. For instance, he suggested, town officials could align themselves politically with the Citizens Awareness Network, an anti-nuclear organization that has asked the NRC to revoke Northeast Utilities' operating licenses.

"We could make it very difficult," said Ainsworth, who believes communication between Connecticut Yankee and the town has markedly improved. "At this point, the pendulum has swung to the opposite end of the spectrum," he said.

NRC to End Environmental Monitoring Program with States

from a January 13, 1998, NRC Press release

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has ended its contracts with 34 states to perform radiation monitoring around certain nuclear facilities at the end of 1997.

Elimination of this program, however, will not impact the NRC's ability to monitor and regulate safety at the facilities. Licensees are required to continue their own environmental monitoring activities to verify that radiation levels around their facilities are negligible.

The separate monitoring program began in the 1970s as a joint effort between NRC and the states to independently compare the results of environmental measurements with those performed by NRC licensees. The program was also intended to help states develop their own radiological health programs, but not to fully fund them. Participation by states was voluntary.

In April 1995, NRC requested public comment on its plans to eliminate the program, citing both the cost (over $1 million a year) and the excellent record of licensees in maintaining their own environmental monitoring programs. NRC also reviewed this issue as part of its strategic assessment and rebaselining initiative.

Based on this review, the staff has determined that information received from the states appears to be of limited value from a safety perspective. In addition, staff believes that states have been provided ample opportunities to develop their own regulatory programs with financial and technical assistance provided by the NRC for more than 20 years.

NRC requires licensees to monitor extensively the air, water, soil, and food products around their facilities. Laboratories where licensees' samples are analyzed must be cross-checked with other laboratories to insure precision and accuracy of measurements. All measurements are submitted annually to NRC and placed in local public document rooms. NRC also inspects licensees' conformance with the requirements on a regular basis.

Licensees may still contract with outside entities (including states) to perform environmental monitoring if they choose. However, the NRC holds each licensee ultimately responsible for adequate monitoring regardless of who performs it.

TMIA Prepares for 20th Anniversary

March 28, 1999, will be the 20th anniversary of the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island. TMIA is planning a number of activities to commemorate the event. Call the TMIA office to learn more or to help.

DOE-TVA Tritium Plan Caution Urged

from a March 24, 1998, Chattanooga Free Press article

Dr. Arjun Makhijani, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, visited the Chattanooga area Monday to speak on the possible global effects of the production of tritium at TVA nuclear facilities. The federal agency is considering the program for its nuclear reactors under a proposal submitted to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The United States stopped producing new tritium in 1988 and DOE is looking for a new production source for the radioactive isotope of hydrogen, a necessary component of nuclear weapons.

Dr. Makhijani, the principal editor of *Nuclear Wastelands: A Global Guide to Nuclear Weapons Production and its Health and Environmental Effects*, questions whether the United States needs to further tritium production at this time. "The rush for tritium production clearly sends a message to the Russians that the U.S. intends to maintain a huge arsenal..... That's a dangerous signal at a time when the Russian command and control over their weapons is declining."

Dr. Makhijani said the search for a new tritium source also sends a bad message to non-nuclear countries: "Mixing up the military and commercial side of tritium production is a very bad signal." He also questioned assumptions "that there's going to be a flow of money into this region because tritium requirements are going to be there."

Dr. Makhijani called that a "risky proposition" because "I think there are clearly a large number of voices already, growing every day because of the dangers of control in Russia, that the number of weapons should be brought down drastically. ... There's absolutely no need to rush into tritium production on the kind of time scale that they're talking about, which is 2005" for the nuclear reactor process to be ready.

A second option being considered by DOE is the building of an accelerator system for tritium production at DOE's Savannah River site near Augusta, Ga.

The accelerator option is estimated to cost $4.5 billion, while completion of TVA's Bellefonte Nuclear Plant near Scottsboro, Ala., is estimated by TVA at about $2 billion, with DOE helping with the financing but TVA retaining ownership.

Jack Bailey, TVA's vice president for nuclear engineering, told Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials recently that TVA's proposal is "the best deal for the taxpayer," according to the Associated Press.

Dr. Makhijani's visit was sponsored by the Knoxville-based Tennessee Valley Energy Reform Coalition (TVERC).

Major Symposium on Radiation and Health

September 26 and 27, 1998
New York City

A two day symposium examining new discoveries on the effects of radiation on human health is planned for September 26th and 27th to be held at the Academy of Medicine, 1216 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Two days of papers by respected epidemiologists, physicians, and scientists will summarize the recent literature on radiation and its biological implications with specific reference to medicine, the nuclear power and nuclear weapons industries.

Presenters include:

* John Gofman, Professor Emeritus of Molecular Biology, University of California and Lecturer at Department of Medicine, University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco

* Alice Stewart MD, FRCP, Department of Public Health and Epidemiology, University of Birmingham

* John Little MD, Professor Radiobiology, Harvard School of Public Health

* Arjun Makhijani, President of Institute for Energy and Environmental Research

* George Woodwell, Director, Woods

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Hole Research Center

* Marvin Resnikoff, Ph.D., Senior Associate Radioactive Waste Management Associates

* William Arkin, Consultant, Natural Resources Defense Council

* Steve Wing, Ph.D., Department of Epidemiology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dr. Helen Caldicott, who organized the original PSR symposia, will act as chief coordinator of this event.

For registration information, please contact: The STAR Foundation, P.O. Box 4206, East Hampton, NY 11937; 516.324.0655.

Environmental Conference Announced

The National Wildlife Federation and Zero Population Growth, along with Penn State-Harrisburg Environmental Program are sponsoring **Wildlife and People: Balancing Needs and Resources in a Finite World.**

The conference will be held June 13, 1998, at the Penn State-Harrisburg campus, in the Capital Union Building. For more information, call 1-800-767-1956.

Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station Seeks Interested Buyers

from a April 17, 1998, NRC press release

On April 16, 1998, Boston Edison Company (BECo) issued letters soliciting expressions of interest in purchasing the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station (PNPS). The letters were sent to more than 100 firms worldwide with experience in operating nuclear power plants.

Office of Consumer Advocate Moves

The Office of Consumer Advocate has moved to 555 Walnut Street, Forum Place, 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17101-1921. Phone: 717-783-5048.

Please renew your TMIA membership

Name_____ Phone_____

Address_____ Zip_____

Membership: ❑ $20 Regular Member ❑ $50 Sustaining Member

❑ $25 Non-Profit Org ❑ $100 Patron

❑ $5 Low Income/Student ❑ $200 Club Member ❑ $10 Newsletter only

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.

TMIA Alert

TMIA
315 Peffer Street
Harrisburg PA 17102

A RED **X** Indicates That Your Dues Payment is Requested

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