

Three Mile Island Alert

The Newsletter of Three Mile Island Alert

February 2001

Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant Passes Inspection

December 7, 2000, York Daily Record

It's good to be in the green.

And that's exactly where Three Mile Island is, according to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's mid-cycle review of the nuclear power plant.

Each quarter, nuclear power plants nationwide look at how they're performing in certain areas and report their findings to the federal agency. The reviews cover everything from security to safety sirens.

The commission uses a color-coded system when evaluating nuclear power plants. Green is considered performance within an expected level. White is considered performance outside an expected range, but objectives are still being met. Yellow indicates objectives are being met, but with a minimal reduction in safety. Red indicates significant safety problems and a plant is shut down.

From April 2 to Sept. 30, Three Mile Island has been in the green,

according to the commission. That means that commission intends to follow the normal inspection program with respect to Three Mile Island.

Peach Bottom also performed well, but had some kinks with its Alert Notification System. That system alerts the public if there are problems at the plant. It is affiliated with Emergency Alert System, which directs people to tune into their television or radio stations for more information.

Staff at the Peach Bottom plant reported to the commission during the third quarter that some of its sirens were inoperable due to improper maintenance, according to the commission. For that reason, Peach Bottom was coded white in that area. The commission plans to perform two supplemental inspections to review Peach Bottom's long-term corrective actions, according to the commission.

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NRC Left Red-Faced by 21-year Consideration of Petition on ENO Criteria

from an October 23, 2000, Inside NRC article

In the wake of the 1979 meltdown at Three Mile Island-2, the Public Citizen Litigation Group and Critical Mass Energy Project petitioned the NRC for a rulemaking that would change its criteria for declaring an "extraordinary nuclear occurrence" (ENO). Last week, 21 years later, the agency denied the petition and withdrew a proposed rule that also suggested changes in the criteria.

"The timing was not our best moment," said NRC spokeswoman Mindy Landau. The commission and staff alike last week were red-faced about the agency's taking 21 years to address the petition even though they felt the ultimate decision was sound.

The NRC commission declared in April 1980, roughly nine months after receiving the petition, that the

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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 to 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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Glossary of Terms

AmerGen - corporation comprised of British Energy and PECO Energy. This corporate entity owns and operates TMI-1 and Oyster Creek, and is contracted by GPU Nuclear to monitor TMI-2 during PDMS

B&W - Babcock & Wilcox, the company that supplied the TMI 1 & 2 reactors. B&W is now known as Framatome

BRP refers to the Bureau of Radiation Protection, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

BWR - Boiling Water Reactor

CPM refers to "counts per minute" or the number of radioactive disintegrations per minute

DEP - Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

EPA - United States Environmental Protection Agency

Exelon - Corporate entity created by the merger of PECO Energy and Commonwealth Edison. This company is licensed to operate nuclear generating stations in Illinois and Pennsylvania

FirstEnergy - Electric company based in Ohio. FE and General Public Utilities have announced plans to merge in 2001. If the merger is approved, the newly formed company would be licensed to operate nuclear power plants in Ohio and Pennsylvania. This company would be responsible for decommissioning Saxton and TMI-2.

General Public Utilities - General Public Utilities Nuclear sold TMI-1 and Oyster Creek to AmerGen in 1999.

GPUN maintains a POL at TMI-2. General Public Utilities, GPUN's parent, is planning to merge with FirstEnergy.

MOX - Reactor fuel in which plutonium-239 is mixed with natural or reprocessed uranium

MWe - Megawatts

NRC - United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission

NCV - Non-Cited Violation issued by the NRC in place of a more severe penalty (see Risk-Informed Approach)

pCi/m³ refers to picoCurries of radiation per cubic meter of air

PDMS - post-defueled monitored storage, which is the state in which TMI-2 is currently being kept

POL - Possession Only License, issued by the NRC for a non-operating nuclear reactor

PUC - Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

PWR - Pressurized Water Reactor

Revised Reactor Oversight Process (ROP) - see Risk-Informed Approach.

Risk-Informed Approach - The NRC's "revised" oversight program for nuclear generating stations. This new protocol was implemented on April 2, 2000, and was designed to "reduce unnecessary regulatory burden" on the nuclear industry. (see NCV).

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The 97 sirens that are placed within a 10-mile radius of Peach Bottom were installed in the 1980s, said Ralph DeSantis, an Exelon spokesman for both Three Mile Island and Peach Bottom. The company became aware on Sept. 21 that 17 of those sirens needed to be fixed, he said. The 17 sirens were replaced and restored into working condition within about a day, DeSantis said.

Peach Bottom received another white score for improperly classifying waste that was shipped to a facility in South Carolina.

Neither incident at Peach Bottom should cause the plant's neighbors any concern, said Diane Screnci, spokeswoman for the commission. "There was no impact on public health and safety on either issue," Screnci said.

Dave Lochbaum, a nuclear safety engineer with the non-profit group Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington D.C., believes a white score in an area is not necessarily a bad thing.

"White is a sign of performance dropping, a flag has been raised and the owner needs to do better," he said. "Because you're white doesn't mean you have safety problems."

Under the commission's quarterly reporting system, companies that see

their performance drop in an area are more inclined to remedy the situation, Lochbaum said.

"No owner wants that flag to be constantly waved," Lochbaum said.

Residents who live near Peach Bottom should not be overly concerned with the plant's white score, he said.

As far as Three Mile Island is concerned, Lochbaum said, green is a good sign. Exelon thinks so, too.

Overall, Exelon is pleased that both Three Mile Island and Peach Bottom received high marks from the commission, DeSantis said. The company's goal, though, is to have both plants completely in the green, he said. ✖



Chernobyl Wheat Has Higher Than Expected Mutations

from an October 4, 2000, Reuters article

Fourteen years after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, wheat grown in Ukraine near the nuclear power station is six times more likely to show mutations than crops grown in uncontaminated soil, scientists said Wednesday.

A report in Nature journal by Olga Kovalchuk of the Friedrich Miescher Institute at the Novartis Research Foundation in Switzerland, and colleagues, compared a wheat crop grown near Chernobyl with a genetically identical crop 19 miles away.

After one generation the Chernobyl crop showed a rate of mutation six times higher than the crop grown in the clean soil, the report said. The scientists said the mutation rate was not in keeping with the levels of radiation.

"We estimate that the wheat plants have been exposed to relatively low doses of chronic irradiation. Theoretically this low-level exposure should not cause such a large increase in the mutation rate," Kovalchuk and her colleagues said.

They concluded that the high mutation rate indicated that "chronic exposure to ionizing radiation has effects that are as yet unknown." Further research was needed to analyze the genetic effects of chronic radiation exposure, the scientists added. ✖

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accident at TMI was not an ENO because there were neither substantial radioactive releases off-site nor substantial property damage off-site. The commission said it based its finding on how Congress defined ENO in the Price-Anderson Act.

A declaration that the accident was an ENO "would have prevented the reactor owner [then GPU] from using certain legal defenses against citizens seeking to recover damages as a result of the accident," Public Citizen said. Last week James Riccio, the group's senior analyst, charged that NRC would never take that long to respond to a petition from the nuclear power industry. "This as an example of how NRC treats the public as second-class citizens," he said. Riccio added he intends to continue carrying the ENO banner and that he was waiting to see if the NRC Office of Inspector General had found any other cases within the agency. According to Riccio, the IG is looking into whether the commission treats the industry any differently than it treats the public.

It was clear, however, by comments on commission notation vote sheets in August, in which commissioners voted to deny the petition on the ENO issue, that commissioners were distressed by the delay. Commissioner Nils Diaz called it "unacceptable." Commissioner Edward McGaffigan said it was "embarrassing," and Commissioner Greta Dicus concurred. Commissioner Jeffrey Merrifield questioned if there were other old petitions still

lingering at the agency. Comments attached to Chairman Richard Merserve's vote sheet consisted of his edits of the notice that would be published in the Federal Register Oct. 17 announcing the withdrawal of the proposed rule and denial of the petition.

According to NRC's Harry Tovmassian, the last person to work on the ENO petition, there is an even older petition still on the books. That one deals with a recommendation to add certain radionuclides to NRC Table S-3 in 10 CFR 51.20. The table contains estimates of the environmental impacts of radionuclides associated with the front- and back-end of the fuel cycle. Though NRC's 1980 annual report said the NUS Corp. had been pushing the agency to update the table, the NRC had concluded by then that even a limited update was not justified because radon was the only issue related to the table that was being raised in reactor licensing proceedings.

On the issue of ENO criteria, early on NRC staff members working on the petition also were involved in the modification of 10 CFR Part 20, which governs radiological releases. The Part 20 work received priority, with the agency thinking that work done there might apply to the ENO petition, Landau said.

Tovmassian said he was assigned to the ENO issue around 1995 or 1996, about the same time a proposed rule on ENO determinations was being considered. "I was looking at it from the standpoint of

whether the proposed rule should be finalized or terminated," he said. Tovmassian said he had to familiarize himself with the proposed rule and with the requirements set forth by Congress. At the same time, he also was working on some high-ranking issues at the agency, including NRC certification of advanced reactor designs and safeguards.

"The [ENO] project was never forgotten about; it wasn't prioritized very highly," he said. Tovmassian added it never received a zero priority. The commission sets staff's project priorities, directing where agency resources should focus.

According to several NRC officials, neither Public Citizen nor Critical Mass ever questioned the agency about why it was taking so long to act on their petition. "No one was prodding them," Landau said of NRC staff working on the petition.

According to Tovmassian, NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation now is looking at the rulemaking process and at how long petitions stay on the books. Only a handful of petitions are still active at the agency, he said. The petition regarding modifications to Table S-3 is the oldest, he said. The rest are no more than a few years old, and several of them are approaching closure.

Landau said a staff paper, Secy 00-160, explaining the delay is expected to be released soon. ❖

Nuclear Plant Dealings – Completed, under Way, and in Negotiations

from a December 2000, Nuclear News article

The following listing describes – as of November 15 -- the status of past and projected nuclear power plant sales in the United States, mergers, license renewal approval, and also some utility name changes.

- * Carolina Power & Light Company and Florida Progress Corporation: Planned merger would join the Crystal River-3 nuclear plant (operated by Florida Power Corporation, a subsidiary of Florida Progress Corp.) with the four nuclear plants of CP&L: Brunswick-1 and -2, Robinson-2, and Shearon Harris.
- * Calvert Cliffs: The first nuclear power plant in the United States to receive approval for a 20-year license renewal. Approval was issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on March 23, 2000.
- * Clinton: Purchased by AmerGen Energy Company from Illinois Power Company for \$20 million; sale closed in December 1999.
- * Columbia: New name of Energy Northwest's WNP-2 nuclear power plant.
- * Consolidated Edison, Inc.: Acquiring Northeast Utilities in a merger that will create a company known as New CEI.
- * Energy Northwest: New name of Washington Public Power Supply System.
- * Entergy Corporation and FPL Group, Inc.: Planned merger expected to close by November 2001. The merger would join the St. Lucie-1 and -2 and Turkey Point-3 and -4 nuclear plants (operated by Florida Power and Light Company, a subsidiary of FPL Group) with the six nuclear plants of Energy: Arkansas Nuclear One-1 and -2, Grand Gulf, River Bend, Waterford-3, and Pilgrim. In addition, Entergy is purchasing FitzPatrick and Indian Point-3 for \$967 million from the New York Power Authority.
- * Exelon Corporation: New company formed by merger of PECO Energy Company and Unicom Corporation.
- * Exelon Generation Company: Newly formed subsidiary of Exelon Corporation (see above item), which will be the holder of the operating licenses of Commonwealth Edison and PECO Energy Company nuclear power plants. ComEd, a subsidiary of Unicom Corporation, and PECO will remain as transmission and delivery companies. The 13 ComEd units moving under control of Exelon Generation Co. are all located in Illinois. They are Braidwood-1 and -2, in Braidwood; Byron-1 and -2, in Byron; Dresden-1 (permanently shut down), -2, and -3, in Morris; LaSalle-1 and -2, in Seneca; Quad Cities-1 and -2, in Cordova; and the permanently shut down Zion-1 and -2, in Zion. The PECO units affected are Peach Bottom-1 (permanently shut down), -2, and -3, in Delta, Pa., and Limerick-1 and -2, in Pottstown, Pa. Also affected are Salem-1 and -2, in Salem, N.J., which are partially owned by PECO but operated by Public Service Electric & Gas Company.
- * Exelon Nuclear: Subsidiary of Exelon Corporation that will be operator of Exelon's nuclear power plants.
- * FirstEnergy Corp. and GPU, Inc.: Planned merger of the two companies expected to be finalized by August 2001 .
- * FitzPatrick and Indian Point-3: Being sold for \$967 million to Entergy Corporation by the New York Power Authority. The sale is expected to close by the end of 2000.
- * Indian Point-2: Offered for sale by Consolidated Edison Company of New York.
- * Millstone-1 (permanently shut down), -2, and -3: Being sold for \$1.3 billion to Dominion Resources, Inc. by Northeast Utilities. The sale is expected to close by April 2001.
- * Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation: Operator of

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the two Nine Mile Point nuclear power plants is merging with National Grid, a United Kingdom company. The merger is conditioned on Niagara Mohawk's sale of its nuclear assets (see Nine Mile Point item below).

* **Nine Mile Point-1 and majority share of Nine Mile Point-2:** To be sold at auction.

* **Nuclear Management Company (NMC):** Operator of the following nuclear power plants (following NRC approval in May): Alliant Energy Corp.'s Duane Arnold, in Iowa; Northern States Power Co.'s Monticello and Prairie Island-1 and -2, in Minnesota; Wisconsin Electric Power Co.'s Point Beach-1 and -2, in Wisconsin; and Wisconsin Public Service Corp.'s Kewaunee, in Wisconsin.

* **Oconee:** The second nuclear power plant in the United States to receive approval for a 20-year license renewal. Approval was issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on May 23, 2000.

* **Oyster Creek:** Purchased by AmerGen Energy Company from GPU Inc. for \$10 million; sale closed in August 2000. The site has three reactors.

* **Perry, Beaver Valley-1 and -2:** Operating licenses transferred from Duquesne Light Company to FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Company in December 1999.

* **Pilgrim:** Purchased by Entergy Nuclear from Boston Edison Company for \$81 million on July 13, 1999.

* **PPL Corporation:** New name of PP&L Resources. Its newly named subsidiary, PPL Susquehanna, LLC, operates the two-unit Susquehanna nuclear power plant.

* **Seabrook:** Expected to be placed on auction in 2001.

* **Three Mile Island-1:** Purchased by AmerGen Energy Company from GPU Inc. for \$100 million; sale closed in December 1999.

* **Vermont Yankee:** AmerGen Energy Company has a purchase agreement with Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation for an initially agreed upon price of \$23.5 million sale pending.

* **Xcel Energy:** Company formed by the merger of Northern States Power Company, operator of the Monticello and Prairie Island nuclear power plants, in Minnesota, and Denver-based New Century Energies.

Radioactive Soil from Nuclear Plants May be Sold to Homes, Farms

from an October 19, 2000, Environment News Service article

A controversial plan that would allow nuclear power plant operators to market their radiologically contaminated soils to construction companies, farmers, golf courses and other commercial entities is moving closer to reality.

After a 14 month literature search, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has selected 56 documents with which to define "realistic reuse scenarios" for the many tons of contaminated soils currently piled up at nation's nu-

clear power plants.

According to the NRC, the nuclear power industry's stockpile of low level contaminated soils could be safely used for a number of private and public endeavors, such as home landscaping projects, athletic fields, and playgrounds.

The 56 documents selected in the literature search, which were culled from a collection of some two million scientific articles, academic publications and industry reports,

will be used to characterize the impacts that the recycled contaminated soils would have on public health and the environment.

Specifically, the NRC hopes to use the documents to analyze the "exposure pathways" that will result from each soil reuse scenario. For example, the NRC will use the documents to analyze the exposure pathways in a "suburban scenario," where recycled nuclear power plant soils are used as backfill around a

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A Bush Bounce for Nuclear Power

from an October 7, 2000, The National Journal article

In late September, George W. Bush had some good news and some bad news for the nuclear power industry. In his high-profile national energy blueprint, Republican presidential candidate Bush gave nuclear power a much needed vote of confidence. Bush stated that nuclear power will play an essential role in the nation's energy future. He also promised \$1 billion over 10 years to streamline government regulations that impede the use of nuclear power. Democrat Al Gore, meanwhile, never mentioned nuclear in his energy plan.

On the downside, however, Bush joined Gore in opposing construction of a temporary nuclear-waste storage site at Nevada's Yucca Mountain. [Ed note: But see [Bush Team Favors Nuclear Dump in Nevada](#), page 8] Utility industry officials have urged the Energy Department to build a temporary site to store the 40,000 metric tons of radioactive waste that has accumulated at 70 commercial nuclear power plant sites across the nation. The federal government is building a permanent underground repository inside the mountain, but it won't be ready until at least 2010.

Bush came out against the temporary waste facility after election polls showed him trailing Gore among Nevada voters, who widely oppose playing host to any nuclear dump.

But Bush's mixed messages don't

bother Joe Colvin, the president of the Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry trade association. Election-year rhetoric aside, he contends, the next President will have to embrace nuclear power. "The Energy Department says we're going to need 200 to 300 gigawatts of new electric generation in the next 15 or so years," Colvin said. "The next President is going to have to look at what's best for the U.S., and non-polluting nuclear is going to have to be part" of the energy mix.

Colvin and other nuclear industry executives argue that nuclear power is entering a new era. The industry's 103 nuclear power plants, which now produce 20 percent of the nation's electricity, are operating at higher rates of efficiency than ever before, they emphasize. Also, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is likely to extend the operating licenses for many of those plants, which are scheduled to close during the next two decades. The commission so far has renewed the licenses for five plants and is reviewing the applications of more than 20 others.

At the same time, the deregulation of electricity markets and the rising price of natural gas has boosted the market value of nuclear power plants, according to a report last month by Cambridge Energy Research Associates and Arthur Andersen. Nuclear power will also get a boost, Colvin contended, as utilities struggle to find easy ways to comply with the strict air pollution

reduction targets that the Clinton Administration has imposed and as the federal government seeks to curb U.S. emissions of the gases that cause global warming. "The new Administration is going to have to come to grips with some of these bigger-picture issues," he said.

The economic vitality of the nuclear industry has improved so dramatically that for the first time since the Three Mile Island nuclear accident took place near Harrisburg, Pa., in 1979, some executives are talking about constructing new nuclear power plants in the United States. "I think a nuclear plant will be built in the U.S.," predicts Jerry Yelverton, the president and CEO of Entergy Corp.'s nuclear energy divisions. "I don't know if it'll be in five years or 10 years. But if the U.S. sees a hot summer next year like the South did, and electric prices go real high, nuclear could be a much more acceptable option."

The Nuclear Energy Institute has begun a series of informal meetings with electric company executives, construction companies, and other energy industry heavyweights to draw up a business plan for new plant construction. Executives from Commonwealth Edison Co., Duke Energy, Entergy Corp., PECO Energy Co., and Southern Co., all of which now own and operate nuclear power plants, have participated in those discussions. Colvin said the group has not decided where, when,

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or what kind of plants should be built. Industry officials note that they're most likely to site a new plant on the campus of an existing nuclear facility, where local residents are less likely to oppose construction. These officials also are discussing the prospects for building 10 or 20 plants, with the hope of saving millions of dollars by standardizing the plant design plans.

Despite the industry's optimism, nuclear power continues to face stiff opposition from environmental activists, who argue that nuclear power is dangerous and produces tons of radioactive waste that will continue to be dangerous for generations. These critics disagree with the industry's contentions that nuclear power is the solution to the nation's pollution problems.

"Switching from coal to nuclear power to solve our global-warming problem would be like giving up smoking and taking up crack," said Daniel F. Becker, the director of global-warming and energy programs at the Sierra Club.

Nuclear industry officials concede that a major hurdle to gaining public

support and Wall Street financing continues to be nuclear-waste disposal. That barrier could fall within the next year. The Energy Department has until the end of the year to decide whether the Yucca Mountain underground facility can safely hold the nation's commercial nuclear waste. If the department gives the site a green light, the project will go to the next President, who will have until July 2001 to make a final decision. Environmentalists and Nevada state officials, however, argue that the department's safety review of the Yucca Mountain facility has been seriously flawed, and they vow to fight any decision to allow waste into the repository.

Meanwhile, several utilities are pursuing lawsuits against the Energy Department for its failure to remove nuclear waste from the power plant sites by the Jan. 31, 1998, congressional deadline. So far, the courts have ruled in the utilities' favor. In December 1998, the Supreme Court let stand a lower-court ruling that the government had an unconditional obligation to accept spent nuclear fuel by the 1998 deadline. In August, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled that owners of four nuclear power plants

have the right to sue the Energy Department to recover damages.

The companies are seeking a total of \$1.3 billion in damages for building and running extra nuclear-waste storage facilities and for other expenses. They argue that the federal government's total liability could wind up being several times higher if recent court rulings are applied to other nuclear power plants. Energy Department officials contend, however, that the utilities' damage estimates are inflated.

Still, nuclear industry officials admit that nuclear power must also overcome the most dangerous threat—the perception gap. Most members of Congress support nuclear power, Colvin said, but lawmakers fear that their constituents are less enthusiastic. In a recent campaign swing in Cleveland, Bush echoed that concern, according to *The New York Times*. Asked by an employee at a local technology company if he supported nuclear power, Bush answered that he did not think Americans were "ready for a nuclear initiative." ❖

Bush Team Favors Nuclear Dump in Nevada

from a January 9, 2001, Las Vegas Sun article

A number of nuclear-power industry leaders who back the plan to bury the nation's high-level radioactive waste in Nevada are among the advisers President-elect George W. Bush assembled to counsel him on energy issues.

Among those bending Bush's ear: Joe Colvin, president and chief executive officer of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), the industry's leading advocacy and lobby group; and J. Bennett Johnston, the former Louisiana senator who authored the

1987 "Screw Nevada" bill that designated Nevada as the only state to be considered as a nuclear dumping ground.

Notably missing from the 48-

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member advisory team are environmentalists or anyone who opposes the plan to bury waste in Nevada, several activists said. "To include NEI, especially, without any attempt at all at balancing that with anyone who represents an environmental perspective, is telling, it's disappointing," said Lisa Gue, policy analyst with Washington-based Public Citizen.

Bush's "Energy Transition Advisory Team" is a collection of leaders from mostly corporate backgrounds including energy company executives and lobbyists. "The list reads like a who's who of the nuclear power industry," Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., said. Of the 48 members, at least 14 have strong ties to the nuclear power industry. Among them: Tom Kuhn, president of Edison Electric Institute, a lobbying arm of the electric power industry and active Yucca Mountain project advocate; and longtime Bush friend and fundraiser, TXU chairman Erle Nye. TXU operates two nuclear reactors in Texas.

Also on the team are Johnston aide Alex Flint; James Langdon, Jr. and Gregg Renkes -- leading lobbyists whose firms work for nuclear power companies; Steve Wakefield, executive with Southern Company and Tom Farrell, an executive with Dominion Energy -- both companies operate nuclear plants; and Judy Walsh and Pat Wood, both members of the Texas Public Utilities Commission, which oversees the nuclear power industry in Texas. "It appears to me we have the industry

directing policy," Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., said.

Of the 48 members, 34 gave donations to the Republican Party, in most cases through their companies' political action committees; 18 gave personal donations to Bush, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, a campaign money watchdog group. Four of Bush's energy advisory team members were so-called Pioneers -- Bush friends who raised at least \$100,000 for his campaign: Occidental Chemical president and CEO J. Roger Hirl; Enron Corp. executive Kenneth Lay; Langdon and Nye.

While no anti-dump activists sit on Bush's energy team, Rep. Jim Gibbons, R-Nev., has said Bush promised an "open-door" policy for Nevada Republicans to voice objections to the Yucca Mountain plan. "After looking at the list, it's basically the same situation that it always has been in that obviously there are some members on there who have voiced strong support for Yucca Mountain," Gibbons spokeswoman Amy Spanbauer said. "It's always been the same battle with 49 states against one." Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., declined to comment, spokeswoman Traci Scott said.

Las Vegas Troy Wade is the only Nevadan on the team, but the former Nevada Test Site miner and a defense official for the Energy Department under President Ronald Reagan is a nuclear weapons and security expert. He is not privy to Yucca Mountain policy discussions, he said Monday.

The entire energy advisory team has not yet met as a group, but it may soon, Wade said. Members of the advisory team act as an information resource for Bush's three-member "Energy Policy Coordination Group," which works out of the Bush-Cheney transition office in Washington. That group is: Andrew Lundquist, chief of staff for the Senate Energy Committee, a top aide to Energy Committee chairman Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, the leading Yucca supporter in the Senate; Paul Longworth, staffer for the Senate Armed Services Committee; Joseph Kelliher, lawyer who specializes in energy issues for the international 750-lawyer firm of LeBoeuf, Lamb, Green and MacRae. Their job is to brief Bush's Energy Secretary pick, former Sen. Spencer Abraham, R-Mich., as he prepares for Senate confirmation hearings. (As a senator, Abraham voted for legislation aimed at establishing the waste site at Yucca). They also will turn Bush's campaign commitments into detailed presidential proposals, according to a press released from the Bush-Cheney transition office. ✖

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 domestic residence.

The exposure pathways resulting from any given soil reuse scenario would vary according to the activities of the people living in the area, the NRC notes. For example, if people within a suburban reuse scenario engaged in gardening activities, the exposure pathways could include inhalation, ingestion of vegetables or fruits, inadvertent ingestion of soil, and external exposure, the NRC points out.

In order to evaluate the potential overall impact of reusing the power plant soils, the NRC will analyze several scenarios to determine a "critical group." The NRC defines a critical group as a group of individuals reasonably expected to receive the greatest exposure to residual radioactivity for any applicable set of circumstances.

The dose of radiation received by the average member of the critical group will then be used to determine whether limitations are required so that soil reuse will be controlled in a way that is protective of public health and the environment, according to the NRC.

The 56 documents that were culled from more than two million during the literature search will provide valuable information in setting those parameters, the NRC maintains.

A key element of the project was to have a team of outside experts review the results of the literature search, the NRC emphasized. Ac-

ording to the NRC, the role of the outside experts was to alert the agency to concepts or information overlooked in the literature search.

One of the independent reviewers, Carlo Long Casler, did make such an alert to the NRC. Casler, who is affiliated with the Arid Lands Information Center at the University of Arizona, asked the NRC to review Russian documents pertaining to the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986. Casler also suggested that the NRC analyze Japanese documents pertaining to the long term health effects of the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki some 55 years ago.

The NCR, in a report released earlier this summer, concluded that the environmental and health impacts of those cases were not relevant to the question of reusing radiologically contaminated soil from U.S. nuclear power plants.

"The unintentional exposure hazard from the high-level radiation that occurred in the cases Ms. Casler mentioned is significantly different from the anticipated exposure derived from soils intentionally released from NRC-regulated locations," the NRC stated in its report.

That's not good enough for Diane D'Arrigo of Nuclear Information and Resource Service, a watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. D'Arrigo, like many environmentalists, takes issue with the NRC's plan to release low level radioactive materials from regulatory standards.

"The goal should be to isolate radioactive materials and prevent exposures, not to deliberately expose people by allowing radioactive materials into regular daily commerce, D'Arrigo said. "If it's contaminated from nuclear power and the fuel chain, then it should be treated as a waste and isolated."

The NRC has already set radiation benchmarks that nuclear power plants must meet before they can be decommissioned. Now, the NRC is trying to set standards that would allow individual aspects of the plants to be released from regulatory control prior to a shutdown. In addition to contaminated soils, these standards would apply to metals, concrete and equipment used at nuclear power plants.

Like many environmentalists, D'Arrigo is not convinced that the NRC's standards will be protective. "When the whole motivation behind it is to allow radioactive materials to be released from regulatory control, we can't have a lot of hope that these are really going to be objective or comprehensive or realistic," she said.

The document can be viewed on line at:
<http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NUREGS/SR1725/index.html> ✖

Leak Forces Shutdown of Beaver Valley Reactor

from a December 12, 2000, *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ) article

A leak in a coolant system at a Pittsburgh-area nuclear power plant forced the shutdown of one of the plant's reactors and prompted a low-level emergency Monday. Authorities said the leak at the Beaver Valley Power Station was contained within the building and there was no indication of a threat to public health or safety.

Reports from the plant, which is about 25 miles west of Pittsburgh, indicated there had not been a radioactive release from the building, said David Smith, director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

The emergency was declared at the plant's No. 2 reactor unit at 5:36 a.m. The leak was called an "unusual event," the least serious of four classifications of power plant emergencies. At one point, radioactive water was spilling onto the floor of the containment building at the rate of 12 to 20 gallons a minute, said Neil Sheehan, federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman. No workers were exposed.

Workers in protective suits went into the building to check the leak but were unable to reach the valve, Sheehan said. They were expected

to try again after the reactor had been fully shut down Monday afternoon, he said. The leak appeared to be coming from a line used to drain water from the reactor's coolant system, said Sheehan.

The other three classifications of nuclear plant emergencies are an alert, a site-area emergency, and a general emergency. Only one general emergency has ever been declared at a U.S. nuclear plant, after the March 1979 accident at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg. ✕



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Disaster Of The Day: Lost Nuclear Waste

from a January 8, 2001, *Forbes.com* article

It's not Chernobyl, but neighbors of the Millstone nuclear plant in Waterford, Conn., can't be too happy. Two fuel rods containing uranium dioxide, a byproduct of nuclear power, have been missing at the Waterford, Conn., nuclear reactor for twenty years. What's worse, plant officials didn't actually notice that the waste was unaccounted for until November 2000.

"We've looked through our records to see if anything like this has ever happened before," says a spokeswoman for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Diane

Screnci, "and it hasn't."

According to plant officials, the fuel rods were removed from the reactor in the early '70s and placed in what's called a cooling pool, where they generally stay for anywhere between six years and 20 years.

"The rods were on the map we did of the pool in May 1980, but they came up missing in September 1980," says a Millstone spokesperson. No one at the reactor noticed that the rods were unaccounted for until this fall, and since then a search has been underway.

"We don't believe [the lost rods] will have any impact on public health and safety," says Screnci, "but obviously we're concerned about the missing rods."

Nevertheless, after being out of the reactor for nearly 30 years, the rods probably don't hold much radiation, if any. "As long as you don't break them apart with your hands and eat them, you're probably okay," says Ted Rockwell, a founder of the Radiation Science and Health, a non-profit organization. ✖

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