

PRESS RELEASE

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PETITIONERS AND FUKUSHIMA REALITY FORCE NUCLEAR REGULATORS TO FINALLY 'REGULATE'

NRC safety panel “accepts” publicly requested actions to review dangerous vents on US Fukushima-style reactors and lack of emergency power for cooling in rooftop nuclear waste pools and more

Takoma Park, MD – A December 13, 2011 decision by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that accepts [several key publicly requested actions](#) regarding safety at US Fukushima-style reactors was publicly noticed in [today's Federal Register](#).

On [April 13, 2011](#), one month after the Fukushima nuclear disaster began, **Beyond Nuclear** formally submitted emergency action requests to an NRC safety review panel regarding safety concerns at the 23 US [Fukushima-style reactors](#). This petition was later joined by over 8,000 co-petitioners, including **Nuclear Energy Information Service** of Illinois. Illinois has 4 such Fukushima-style reactors, all operated by Exelon: Dresden 2 and 3 on the Illinois River near Morris, IL; and Quad Cities 1 and 2, near Cordova on the Mississippi River.

The NRC's chief safety officer, Eric Leeds, agreed that the NRC will now review [several key publicly requested actions](#) including revoking federal approval of the current failed GE Mark I containment venting system; and ordering all Mark I operators to install backup emergency power systems to assure cooling in the reactors' densely packed rooftop irradiated fuel pools.

“The NRC must revoke its approval of dangerous venting systems installed on these Fukushima-style reactors and an NRC safety panel has accepted this for review,^[2]” said Paul Gunter, Director of the Reactor Oversight Project at Beyond Nuclear. “Putting a vent on reactor containment to save it from a nuclear accident is as rational as putting screen doors on submarines,” he said. “If these reactors can't meet their original licensed condition for containment as ‘essentially leak tight’ then they shouldn't be allowed to operate,” he said.

Leeds dismissed a request from the petitioners for “immediate” enforcement action without which, the petitioners argue, US reactors can remain vulnerable to failure for decades.

The NRC safety panel agreed with the public petitioners that emergency back-up power systems (alternating current from generators and direct current from battery banks) be installed to cool densely-packed high-level radioactive waste cooling ponds that sit six to ten stories up in the Mark I reactor building where, per unit, hundreds of metric tons of highly radioactive and thermally hot spent fuel is being stored.^[3]

“Every community living in the shadows of these reactors with a rooftop high-level radioactive waste dump wants the emergency power systems installed, now, to assure cooling to hundreds of tons of

irradiated nuclear fuel when the lights go out,” said Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Specialist with Beyond Nuclear. “Our recommendation is a significant upgrade over the current NRC task force’s aim to only supply emergency power to ‘makeup water,’ as we call for prevention of boil off in the first place,” he said. “We’re asking questions about the unintended consequences from that condensation raining down on control room electrical circuits and elsewhere,” he concluded.

“In spite of the recent failed coup attempt by the nuclear industry and its allies to force out the only Commissioner of the five calling for assertive regulation of US reactors post-Fukushima, we’re glad that someone at NRC recognizes that protecting the public safety and health is supposed to be NRC’s prime mission,” states a less-sanguine Dave Kraft, director of NEIS, an Illinois nuclear watchdog organization.

“Since all Illinois reactors – including the 4 Fukushima-type reactors at Dresden and Quad Cities – are sited on rivers, we are pleased that NRC will be considering the impact of severe flooding[4] on Illinois and other US reactors. Perhaps the transition of Nebraska’s Fort Calhoun reactor into “Port” Calhoun over the summer was just too much reality for even NRC to ignore,” says Kraft, referring to the Nebraska reactor that was engulfed by Missouri River floodwaters for six months in 2011.

Beyond Nuclear has launched a national coalition effort to “Freeze Our Fukushimas” which aims to permanently suspend operations at all 23 General Electric Mark I Boiling Water Reactors in the United States similar to the dangerously flawed reactors that melted down and exploded in Japan following the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

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LINKS TO DOCUMENTS

December 13, 2011, NRC Nuclear Reactor Regulation Director’s Decision

http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/mark-1-campaign/mk-1-2206/fof_nrc_fdd_1213201113_ML11339A078.pdf

Federal Register Notice [NOT YET POSTED]

http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/mark-1-campaign/mk-1-2206/bn_2206_nrc_accepts_fm_12272011_rev1.pdf

April 13, 2011 Beyond Nuclear Petition for Emergency Enforcement Action

http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/mark-1-campaign/mk-1-2206/bn_2206_ge_bwr_041320111.pdf

List of GE Mark Boiling Water Reactors in the United States

http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/mark-1-campaign/mk-1-%20list_of_us_reactors.pdf

[2] Issue No. 3)b “Table Summarizing Each Issue for 2.206 Criteria,” Enclosure 1, NRC Letter from Eric Leeds, Director of Nuclear Reactor Regulation to Paul Gunter, Beyond Nuclear, December 13, 2011, p. 7 of 18.

[3] Ibid, Issue No. 3)c, p. 8 of 18.

[4] Ibid, Issue No. 5, p. 8 of 18.