








“IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO – DO WE TRUST THE NRC?”

Citizens rejecting NRC’s “waste confidence” ruling at public meetings by wide margin

At the recent NRC public meeting in Chicago, one of the commenters, a woman from Michigan, made a statement that, more and more, seems to be the defining answer to NRC’s question about public sentiment towards its “waste confidence” rule: “This member of the public does not share your confidence!”

Since trust is largely a function of how one is treated by another, it is a fair and realistic question to ask: how can the public have ANY confidence in an Agency with a track record like this? :

-  NRC expects the public to accept that spent-fuel can be safely stored at reactor sites indefinitely under its supervision. One month ago, NRC could not even guarantee that it could put a workforce in the field due to the government shutdown.
-  By a 4 to 1 vote, the Commission voted against quicker implementation of Fukushima lessons learned, delaying them at U.S. Fukushima-type reactors for up to 6 years. Those four Commissioners later forced out the Commission Chair Gregory Jaczko – the only one in favor of more rapid implementation of safety measures.
-  According to authors John Byrne and Steven Hoffman, since the 1980s the NRC has generally favored the interests of nuclear industry and has been unduly responsive to industry concerns. The NRC has often failed to pursue tough regulation. At the same time, it has sought to hamper or deny public access to the regulatory process and created new barriers to public participation. (*Source: Governing the Atom: The Politics of Risk, 1996*)
-  “The number of safety violations at U.S. nuclear power plants varies dramatically from region to region, pointing to inconsistent enforcement in an industry now operating mostly beyond its original 40-year licenses, according to a congressional study awaiting release...the reasons aren't fully understood because the NRC has never fully studied them, the report says. Right now, its authors wrote, the "NRC cannot ensure that oversight efforts are objective and consistent." (*Source: “Uneven enforcement suspected at nuclear plants,” AP, Oct. 16, 2013*)
-  “A disastrous fire in March 1975 [at the Brown’s Ferry Reactor in Alabama] nearly caused two of its reactors to melt down. The NRC adopted fire protection regulations in 1980 seeking to prevent another serious nuclear plant fire. But the three reactors at Browns Ferry, along with nearly four dozen other reactors in the U.S., still do not comply with fire protection regulations more than three decades later....It’s not the cumulative effects of regulation that the NRC should be evaluating. The NRC should be concerned about the cumulative effects of non-regulation.” (*Paper by David Lochbaum, UCS, “Cumulative Effects of Non-Regulation,” August 23, 2012*)
-  “In a letter submitted Friday afternoon to internal investigators at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, a whistleblower engineer within the agency accused regulators of deliberately covering up information relating to the vulnerability of U.S. nuclear power facilities that sit downstream from large dams and reservoirs. The letter also accuses the agency of failing to act to correct these vulnerabilities despite being aware of the risks for years.” (*Source: Flood Threat To Nuclear Plants Covered Up By Regulators, NRC Whistleblower Claims, Huffington Post, Sept. 14, 2012*)
-  “A separate former senior Democratic aide who has worked with Jaczko, Magwood and Flint said that Yucca is the impetus for the industry's opposition to the outgoing chairman. ...Magwood "and the industry hate Greg because they think he was put on the commission by Reid, who's anti-Yucca, and he's gonna be a Reid stooge. And you know what? They're f*cking right," the former aide said. "That's exactly why he was put on there. But **that commission and that agency were complete and total captives of the nuclear industry. One and the same.**" (*Source: “Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Steps Down,” Ryan Grim, Huffington Post, May 21, 2012; emphasis ours.*)