



Nuclear Energy Information Service

"Illinois' Nuclear Power Watchdog for 25 years"

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PRESS RELEASE

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Thousands Call for Improved Reactor Safety and Security on Fifth Anniversary of 9/11

CHICAGO— The signatures of thousands of Illinoisians calling for improved safety and security at Illinois 14 nuclear reactors were presented once again to members of the Illinois delegation and the Governor on this, the 5th anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

"In the post-9/11 world, nuclear reactors are World Trade Centers with 1,000 Hiroshima's worth of radiation stored inside," explained David Kraft, director of the Nuclear Energy Information Service, an Illinois nuclear power watchdog organization.

"Since Illinois has more reactors – fourteen, eleven of which are operating – than any other state, plus the world's busiest airport at O'Hare Field less than 30 minutes flight time away from all of them, this is no mere abstract concern. It's an issue that strikes at the economic and environmental heart of Illinois, should the next 9/11 attempt occur at one of these sites," Kraft warned.

This is the fifth consecutive year that NEIS has delivered such petitions to members of the Illinois delegation and the Governor's Office.

The delivery of the petitions follows on a press conference held last week by Rep. Ed Markey and other U.S. House members, calling for improved security measures at the reactor spent fuel pools. Such necessary improved security measures have been dubbed "HOSS" – for "hardened on-site storage."

"It is our belief and analysis that, while the reactors themselves *might* be able to withstand direct hits from some but not all large commercial or military aircraft, or explosives from land and water based terror assaults, the spent reactor fuel pools and the recently constructed temporary "dry cask" storage containers used at some sites could and would not be able to without large releases of radionuclides," Kraft notes. "With the immanent arrival of the 550 ton French Airbus A-380 to O'Hare Field as early as 2008, this issue must be addressed with greater urgency," Kraft says.

The petition (available on the NEIS website at www.neis.org) calls for 4 critical changes in nuclear plant regulations to improve reactor safety and security in the post 9/11 environment:

- 1.) **Require** all currently operating reactors and spent fuel pools to be made capable of withstanding impacts from current and future planned aircraft without a release of radiation as a mandatory condition for renewal of their operating licenses;
- 2.) **Prohibit** the licensing and construction of **any** new reactors without a containment structure design that can **demonstrate** it can withstand impacts from current and planned generation aircraft without a release of radiation;

- 3.) **Abandon** permanently NRC's proposed plans and programs allowing the nuclear industry self-evaluation in the areas of plant safety and security; and have NRC **require** utilities to demonstrate to evaluators independent of NRC and the nuclear industry the ability to successfully resist terrorist assaults from land, sea, and air, or face license suspension;
- 4.) **Support** the aggressive implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy resources resulting in 20% of US electricity needs being met by renewable energy resources by the year 2020, as a way to begin phasing out these potential nuclear terrorist targets as soon as possible, while still meeting legitimate energy needs.

Earlier this year the Nuclear Regulatory Commission called for public comments on what is called the "design basis threat" – the parameters used to evaluate a reactor's integrity and capability to survive accidents and assaults without releases of large amounts of radionuclides into the surrounding environment. To date NRC has made no formal rulings or regulatory changes on reactor or spent fuel designs based on the public's proposed changes. (NOTE: NEIS' comments are available on its website at www.neis.org)

"If our reactors and spent fuel pools can not survive the threats of the post-9/11 world, then they should not be permitted to operate in the post-9/11 world," Kraft maintains. "We use these petitions to show that thousands of Illinoisians agree with this common sense principle, and to urge our leaders in government to make the necessary changes in reactor operation and regulation to insure either reactor survivability, or responsible and prudent reactor closure," Kraft states.

"Because the consequences of being wrong are so severe, there can be no 'middle ground' approach. The first reactor-9/11 will be the last one. If it takes place in Illinois, our economy and agriculture will be reduced to the state of present-day Belarus," Kraft asserts, referring to the nation most severely affected by the 1986 nuclear accident at Chernobyl.

"To recall the old adage: 'What has already happened must be possible,'" Kraft concludes.