



Nuclear Energy Information Service

“Illinois’ Nuclear Power Watchdog for 23 years”

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To the Editors:

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, “Safety and Security of Commercial Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage” released last week demonstrates the serious flaws existing in the regulation and operation of nuclear power; and should heighten public skepticism of plans for new nuclear plants.

The Report’s conclusions differ markedly from the smooth-talking, self-serving pronouncements of NRC regulators and nuclear utilities like Exelon on important public issues.

NRC describes airline crashes into reactors as “unrealistic scenarios.” The NAS Report unequivocally states, “...successful terrorist attacks on spent fuel pools, though difficult, are possible...” and “could result in the release of large amounts of radioactive material” in case of severe fires. An attack would be “certainly no more difficult than the Sept. 11 attacks,” states NAS study director Kevin Crowley.

While crediting NRC and industry for positive changes, the Report criticizes NRC’s excessively restrictive policy of withholding vital information from Report investigators, industry and the public. While NRC astonishingly prohibits consideration of terrorism in reactor relicensing proceedings because calculating the probability of terrorist attacks was “too hard,” the Report unequivocally states that, even though such probabilities can’t be calculated, “Spent fuel storage facilities *cannot* be dismissed as targets for such attacks *because* it is not possible to predict the behaviors and motivations of terrorists....” (emphasis ours).

While the Report clearly sees improved security and safety of spent fuel storage at certain reactors by the increased, responsible use of dry-casks, Exelon’s CEO John Rowe simply says, “There’s no such plan at the moment,” to move fuel from wet pools to dry casks at Exelon reactors.

In 2002 full-page Exelon/ComEd/IBEW newspaper ads screaming “national security” pressured Senators to adopt severely flawed Yucca Mt. radioactive waste repository legislation. They claimed opening Yucca would reduce the number of less-secure high-level radioactive waste sites from nearly 80 down to 1. The NAS states, “Spent fuel pools are *necessary at all operating* nuclear power plants...Fresh discharged spent fuel generates too much decay heat” for safe removal to either dry casks onsite, or Yucca Mt. – *exactly* what nuclear critics stated. Operating reactors *continually* discharge “fresh discharged spent fuel” which can’t go anywhere for 3-5 years. Exelon and IBEW deliberately manipulated the public and Senators into unwise, scientifically unsound choices.

These are the same people advocating new reactors for Illinois. Wise people will learn from history, reject future lies of convenience, and protect Illinois’ communities by opposing Exelon’s plans for nuclear expansion.

(399 words)

Gratefully, for a less-nuclear world,

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