

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Activists Demand Nuke Plant Closure at NRC Public Meeting

Nuclear Regulatory Commission to Release investigation findings on San Onofre June 18 in San Juan Capistrano

Ratepayers Demand that Edison CEO Craver Shutter Troubled Plant

June 14, 2012 (SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO) – The public will rally and sponsor a press conference in opposition to continued operation of the San Onofre nuclear plant on Monday, June 18, at 5pm prior to the 6pm public meeting scheduled by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) at the San Juan Capistrano Community Center at 25925 Camino Del Avion, San Juan Capistrano, California.

After months of investigation, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold its first public meeting after the emergency shut down of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station on January 31, 2012, and after their official investigation into the steam generator failures.

“Unfortunately, the NRC wants to limit valuable public input by withholding their report until they announce it at the meeting, making it difficult to the public to formulate questions on this technically complex issue,” said electrical engineer Ray Lutz, National Coordinator for Citizens' Oversight Projects. “This is the first public meeting where the public will have a chance to speak and ask questions. It's too bad they're making this like a pop-quiz instead of a take-home test.”

Activists are concerned that the NRC will deliver a token report on what occurred, followed by a “we'll have to study your report” response by the utility. NRC Chair Gregory Jaczko, the sole dissenting voice on the commission, recently announced his resignation, signaling that the commission would likely turn into a rubber stamp for utility wishes.

Edison Chair Theodore F. Craver, Jr. admitted that it really was his decision alone to decommission the plant, and that it would be the most difficult decision of his career. The reality is that the decision to decommission could be made immediately, regardless of NRC processing and inquiries. Continuing the effort to restart the plant will either mean that NRC will look the other way and allow the unsafe plant to restart at reduced power, ignoring the fact that experts agree that this will likely only exacerbate the rattling steam generators, or spending a great deal of money to replace the steam generators once again, with no guarantee that these will work either.

“The NRC investigation was limited in scope to avoid the most important issue: the regulatory process

which allowed the 'super-charged' steam generators to be installed without NRC approval," Lutz said. "Edison engineers bragged about being able to upgrade the reactors without any such approval, and indeed, it was even the 'major premise' of the project. If the NRC is not going to review this, then it raises a good question: when does this review occur or is this just going to be swept under the rug?"

Even if the steam generators were working like they were supposed to, we now know that the plant is in an earthquake zone, a tsunami inundation zone, and would likely fail in any sort of moderate earthquake. Operators admitted last month that vibration sensors on crucial equipment would improperly shut down that equipment in the event of an earthquake.

San Onofre, designed for a 6.0 quake and upgraded to withstand 7.0, is certainly at risk given the recent 7.5 magnitude quake near Mexicali and the recently discovered fault only yards from the reactor site. That new fault experienced a 3.8 quake just last month.

The underlying agenda of SCE, the plant operator, was to "super-charge" the steam generators, essentially upgrading the plant to produce more power without NRC or approval by the public [1]. SCE Engineers admitted in January that they worked to avoid full NRC review of the changes. In an article in Nuclear Engineering International: "the major premise of the steam generator replacement project was that it would be implemented under the 10CFR50.59 rule, that is, without prior approval by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (USNRC)" [2, emphasis added].

On April 25, citizen activists submitted a letter to NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko detailing requests for action prior to any restart of the reactors at San Onofre [3]. These requests will form the basis for some of the questions and comments from the public. Some of the questions from the public should include:

1. Has the NRC investigation determined the root cause of the steam generator failure?
2. Has the NRC also determined why the design error occurred?
 1. Was it due to faulty simulations, faulty testing, or no testing or simulation at all, using the "see if it breaks" approach?
 2. Is there a fundamental gap in our understanding of physics that limits our ability to predict this failure?
3. Has the analysis from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries been completed, and if so, what was their conclusion, and can we get a copy of their report?
4. The likely root cause is a mis-design by SEC and MHI engineers. What corrective action is planned, if any, to rectify the design errors so that excessive tube degradation will not occur?
5. What assurance do we have that the same engineers can do it right this time? If this occurs, will the NRC approve every step of the way?
6. Indeed, since this design was so problematic, what assurance do we have that other systems that are never tested until a disaster occurs will actually perform as intended?
7. SCE has said they intend to plug some tubes and run the reactor at a lower power, but experts agree that this approach will not reduce the rattling of the tubes but instead may increase it. Has there been an analysis to confirm that such operation will reduce tube degradation or is this just a wild guess by SCE engineers?
8. The inquiry by the NRC was limited in scope and did not include any of the regulatory process that also failed to ensure that such poor designs will ever result. Will there be a separate inquiry by the NRC into such regulatory matters? If not, which agency does that type of review?

9. It is clear now that SCE engineers intended to boost the power output from the plant by modifying the steam generators to generate more steam [1 & 2]. Such a capacity upgrade for a nuclear plant would normally require a re-licensing procedure and it would be paid by the shareholders and not by the ratepayers. Since SCE worked around the law to upgrade this plant in capacity without going through the required procedure:
 1. will the operators be fined for violating NRC regulations?
 2. will the company be required to charge shareholders for this debacle rather than ratepayers, and undo the improper charge to ratepayers that occurred under the guise that this was just a maintenance and not a capacity upgrade?
 3. will the relicensing procedure be activated in ex-post facto fashion so that review by the NRC and the public, as required by law, be respected?
10. What is the status of the investigation into the electrical fire that occurred on April 20, 2012?
11. What is the status of the investigation into the worker who fell into the primary coolant pool in January, 2012?
12. What is the status of the investigation into the vibration sensors on the emergency pumps that had to be disabled because they would improperly shut down the pumps in the event of an earthquake?
13. What steps are being taken to address post-Fukushima concerns at nuclear power plants in the United States, including San Onofre? Will the plants be stress-tested to insure that they will be likely to perform as intended when these disasters occur?
14. Seismic studies costing \$64 million have been approved for the vicinity of San Onofre. What will be done with these studies when they are completed? Will the plant be simulation tested to see if it will survive any possible earthquake and/or tsunami?

EVENT DETAILS:

Event: Rally / Press Conference
Date/Time: Monday June 18, 2012, 5pm.
Location: San Juan Capistrano Community Center

Event: NRC Meeting
Date/Time: Monday June 18, 2012, 6pm.
Location: San Juan Capistrano Community Center

References:

[1] <http://sciencedude.ocregister.com/2012/01/05/powering-up-nuclear-plant-to-boost-output/166317/> -- [Powering up: Nuclear plant to boost output](#) -- "The new [steam] generators raised the amount of steam energy produced in the reactors."

[2] <http://www.copswiki.org/Common/M1252> -- "Improving Like-for-like RSGs" from Nuclear Engineering International -- Describes the many changes made to the steam generators to increase the steam energy developed.

[3] <http://www.copswiki.org/Common/M1254> -- "Letter to NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko Requesting Specific Steps before restarting the San Onofre reactors"