



Fall 2014 Newsletter

Diablo Canyon: IN THE NEWS

SEISMIC REVIEW: Pacific Gas & Electric Company's (PG&E) long-awaited seismic report has recently been released. PG&E was quick to claim that Diablo is safe to operate despite the numerous faults in the surrounding area. But the report has yet to be independently reviewed by the Peer Review Panel established by the California Public Utilities Commission. A formal decision regarding the seismic safety of Diablo Canyon is still many months away.

DR. MICHAEL PECK'S DIFFERING PROFESSIONAL OPINION: Dr. Peck was the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Senior Resident Inspector at Diablo Canyon for five years. After the discovery of the Shoreline Fault in 2008, Dr. Peck raised concerns about the safety of the plant. It is his assertion that any of the three nearby faults - Shoreline, Los Osos, and San Luis Bay - is capable of producing significantly more ground motion during an earthquake than was accounted for in the design of safety-related plant equipment.

The NRC delayed its review for over a year, and then finally released its finding on September 10 that the plant is safe from the largest conceivable earthquakes and is properly licensed. This report came within an hour of PG&E's seismic review (noted above) and is thus the topic of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by Friends of the Earth, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Mothers for Peace, and the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. This FOIA request seeks to determine whether the NRC and PG&E improperly worked together on

a public relations strategy to counteract widespread news coverage of the evidence provided by Dr. Michael Peck. According to the FOIA request, "The PG&E seismic report, released on the same day [as the decision on the inspector's dissent] indicates a possible relationship between the regulator and its licensee that has brought up widespread public concern regarding the independence of the regulator. There have been numerous concerns as to how the two documents could have been released simultaneously, given that [the handling of the inspector's dissent] has been kept secret."

Additionally, Senator Barbara Boxer, chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, announced that it would hold hearings into how the NRC has handled Dr. Peck's concerns and recommendations.



art by Anne Kellogg

69th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI: Mothers for Peace met for shared poetry reading and contemplation on August 6 at Eto Park in San Luis Obispo. Each year Mothers for Peace organizes a gathering to remember the victims and reaffirm aspirations to promote peace and to abandon nuclear energy and weapons.

Mothers for Peace Intervention

LICENSE RENEWAL CHALLENGE: Mothers for Peace's seismic contention challenging PG&E's application for license renewal has been delayed - awaiting PG&E's submission of the seismic studies (submitted September 10, 2014) - and now the independent peer review as well. Hearings are not expected to take place until spring of 2016. The substance of Mothers for Peace's legal challenge is that PG&E's "severe accident mitigation alternatives" fails to consider information regarding the Shoreline Fault - and thus does not satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The substance of this challenge, however, may be expanded on the basis of new information gleaned from PG&E's seismic studies.

DANGERS OF FIRE IN FUEL STORAGE

POOLS: Mothers for Peace was among 34 organizations filing a petition on June 26, 2014, asking the NRC to revise its environmental analysis of "spent" fuel storage impacts. This petition was based on new and significant information generated in the NRC's Expedited Spent Fuel Transfer proceeding - where the NRC admitted for the first time that even a small reactor pool fire could render 9,400 square miles uninhabitable and displace 4.1 million Americans on a long-term basis. It also conceded that transferring spent fuel from high-density pools to dry storage could be a cost-effective and mitigative measure. The petition filed by the 34 organizations argues that this information must be considered before licensing or re-licensing any nuclear reactors.

HIGH BURNUP FUEL IN UNTESTED

CASKS: "Burnup" is a way to measure the uranium burned in a reactor. The burnup level affects the fuel's temperature and radioactivity. Over time, burnup has increased which has allowed utilities to get more power out of their fuel before replacing it. Because this fuel is "hotter" than what had been traditionally seen, there is concern that the spent fuel cask designs are not robust enough to store and transport this high burnup fuel. In May of 2014, Mothers for Peace attorney Diane Curran, acting on behalf of 20 organizations,

challenged NRC approval of the use of a specific cask design - 32PTH2 - for transporting radioactive wastes from high burnup fuel. This cask has not been thoroughly tested and was approved without public notice and an opportunity for participation as required by federal law.



WASTE CONFIDENCE ISSUE: Before licensing a reactor, the Atomic Energy Act requires assurance that the spent fuel can be safely disposed of in a geologic repository at some point in the future. Yet the NRC has now dropped this regulation, a significant safety issue because radioactive waste storage poses serious public health and environmental hazards. Thus, Mothers for Peace has joined with 16 other groups nationwide seeking federal court intervention if the NRC does not stop the licensing and relicensing of 23 reactors at 14 sites across the United States. Diablo Canyon is among these sites.

\$ Funding \$

Please consider making a generous, tax-deductible donation to Mothers for Peace. There are two convenient ways to contribute ~ by mail or on-line. We appreciate your continued support of our crucial work.

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