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CONCERNED CITIZENS FROM WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

October 24, 2000

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555

Since we live about 100 miles from 4 nuclear power reactors that are under consideration for the use of plutonium fuel and in light of recent revelations, we are asking for public hearings in our community.

We are concerned about the withholding of information concerning a near disaster at one of Duke Energy's Catawba nuclear reactors, which took place in 1996 about which we just learned this week. Having withheld information from the public about potential risks from nuclear reactors could have profoundly impacted our lives here in Western North Carolina with no warning whatsoever.

We are appalled about this week's release that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission withheld information about four Duke Energy nuclear reactors within 25 miles of Charlotte, one of which came perilously close to a "critical" situation in 1996, due to a power failure lasting for a day and a half. We learned that during the power outage, only one of two backup generators was operational. In the event it had ceased to operate for as short a period of time as an hour, a significant risk of a meltdown would have occurred.

When we learned that these nearby nuclear reactors are four of just nine in the entire country that utilize "ice condensers" making them unusually vulnerable to Chernobyl-type accidents and that they happen to be the ones selected by the Department of Energy for the first experimental use of a fuel (MOX) containing plutonium oxide from dismantled nuclear weapons, we have grave doubts about the wisdom of their selection.

Considering the terrible consequences should such a tragedy take place, including lives lost, large numbers of people exposed to cancer causing radiation, the overwhelming burden of acutely and chronically ill people in need of medical care, the displacement of masses of people and the incalculable economic loss, we strongly request that public hearings take place in potentially affected communities, including right here in Asheville.

Signed

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Copies to our Congressional delegation

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