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To: <LRGEISUpdate@nrc.gov>
Date: Fri, Aug 22, 2003 2:45 PM
Subject: aging nuclear energy plants

6/3/03
68 FR 33209
(19)

Dear U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

The NRC, the federal agency charged with controlling the nuclear-power industry, is re-evaluating the criteria it uses when considering applications for license extensions for reactors that have reached the end of the 40-year operating life allowed by their original permits.

The NRC has processed 16 such license-renewal applications, and in all cases it allowed the plants' corporate owners to run them for another 20 years.

But these plants were dangerous to begin with, and after 40 years of operation under intense pressures, they are now susceptible to a variety of stress-related defects, such as the corrosion that ate through six inches of steel and nearly produced a disaster at the Davis-Besse nuclear station in Ohio. As the recent Northeast blackout reminds us, our power system is a fragile and unpredictable creation – especially in an era of deregulation – and if these old reactors are allowed to remain in operation, the risks of catastrophe are simply unacceptable.

Even in normal, "safe" operations, every nuclear reactor produces between 20 and 30 tons of lethal, high-level radioactive waste every year - waste that will remain radioactive for tens of thousands of years. In addition, reactor facilities produce massive quantities of low-level waste – waste that isn't immediately lethal, but still poses substantial health and environment hazards. There is no known way to safely dispose of any of this waste. Even the controversial Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada isn't designed to accommodate the additional waste that would be generated by extending the life of current reactors by 20 years.

These plants need to be decommissioned as soon as possible.

thank you,
Andrew Berna-Hicks
Oakland, California

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