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To The Editor, Boston Globe;

Your Sept. 10 9-11 security story grossly misinformed readers by misrepresenting the NRC's work. The agency rejects the "conclusions" described in the article, and would have done so prior to the article's publication if the Globe had asked.

The article refers to a Feb. 2001 NRC report describing spent fuel pools at permanently closed nuclear plants, not intentional acts against nuclear plants. The report made the conservative assumption that a large aircraft could penetrate a reactor building's outer wall in 45 percent of impacts; but the Globe failed to note that the report also concluded that the possibility of an accidental crash causing enough damage to leave the spent fuel uncovered by water was no more than 6 chances in 100 million per year. Even that unlikely scenario, however, would not automatically lead to radioactive contamination reaching the environment. The National Academies of Science, in a 2005 report, also said "an attack that damages a power plant or its spent fuel storage facilities would not necessarily result in the release of any [original italics] radioactivity to the environment."

The NRC report was not the article's source for the estimate of several thousand possible cancer cases.

A call to the NRC could have put some perspective in the story.

/RA/

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