

TESTIMONY OF THE COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

SUBMITTED BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE ANDREW P. O'ROURKE TO THE
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Since the May 5 announcement of your honorable Commission that the Indian Point nuclear power plants in Buchanan, New York should be closed unless appropriate actions were taken, Westchester County government has been cooperating fully with the principal utilities in their efforts to correct the deficiencies in the Emergency Response Plan. Let me say from the outset, that the safety of our citizens has been, and will continue to be Westchester County's first concern. Please know that our endeavors in this matter will not cease with what has been accomplished thus far. We are committed to achieving an Emergency Response Plan for Westchester County that can be a model for the 102 other counties in the country similarly situated within 10 miles of a nuclear power plant.

Westchester County government has worked and will continue to work with Consolidated Edison, The New York Power Authority, and New York State to prepare for an evacuation of the area around Indian Point. To that end, I have held or arranged, numerous meetings since May 9, 1983 with the utilities, bus company officials, bus union leaders, county officials and state officials. Out of many hours of meetings with many concerned and dedicated people, have come several significant breakthroughs.

Of immediate concern is a commitment by unions representing the majority of union bus drivers to fully support a two-hour orientation course on radiological emergency response procedures for all bus drivers in Westchester prior to June 9.

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In addition, the unions have agreed to include maintenance workers with Class 2 Drivers licenses in the course - a move that brings the pool from which to draw potential volunteers to more than 1500 drivers.

As of this writing, bus drivers and mechanics have already begun the orientation course on radiation, including bus drivers' role in a radiological emergency, and the use of protective measures in radiological emergencies. We expect the entire driving pool to receive this training before mid-June. From this group we will ask for 500 drivers who would volunteer to respond in the event of a radiological emergency at Indian Point. Please understand, that participation in this course does not commit any driver to being a volunteer.

I would like your honorable Commission to be aware that the bus union leadership in the area has been extremely cooperative in this matter, and in fact, all six unions have made commitments to present this orientation program to their rank and file membership.

Westchester County has also secured commitments from three major bus companies in the area to sign "Letters of Intent for Interim Contracts" with Consolidated Edison and the New York Power Authority, to provide up to 1,200 buses for an evacuation - twice the number expected to be needed in a "worst-case" accident.

In the area of equipment, Westchester County has secured a commitment from New York State to provide bus companies with 1,000 dosimeters. Westchester County has also secured commitments from the two utilities to provide bus companies with 1,000 bottles of potassium iodide tablets, 1,000 copies of the bus evacuation route directions for drivers, and 96 bus route evacuation maps for bus managerial and supervisory personnel. In addition Westchester County will be providing the bus companies with 1,000 TLD's (film badges).

Westchester County has been able to finalize agreements with the State of New York, Consolidated Edison, the New York Power Authority and a consulting group - The Transportation Safety Planning Group (TSPG) of Albany - to start work on a long-awaited Transportation Study we believe is necessary to correct deficiencies in the public transportation segment of the Emergency Response Plan.

TSPG will be starting work on this ten-month, "hands-on" review of the transportation segment of the Emergency Plan during the week of May 23, 1983. The study will consist of actual driving of buses on all bus evacuation routes, time-study exercises, and route corrections. We expect progress reports from TSPG at several intervals during the ten-month period (which we will make available to your honorable Commission) and will make corrections to the Emergency Plan as required.

I ask your honorable Commission to keep in perspective the fact that this bus dilemma addresses a component of the Emergency Preparedness Plan that affects approximately 11% of the population.

While it is extremely important to protect the health and safety of this public-transit dependant population,

Westchester County has a grave and substantial concern for the other 89% of the population who would be traveling in their own cars. The issue of equipment and training for our police officers, fire fighters and emergency workers must be addressed.

On this same subject, your honorable Commission may be aware that this week the Town of Ossining, which is within the 10-mile EPZ in Westchester County, considered removing itself from the Emergency Response Plan because of a lack of emergency equipment and training. In response to this concern, I called a meeting with the two utilities and the Supervisor of the Town of Ossining to attempt a redress of the problems.

An outgrowth of that meeting and a subsequent Town Council meeting was the Town of Ossining's compromise offer to give the utilities 90 days to correct the deficiencies, and a request that I create a County/Municipal Task Force on Indian Point for all the Westchester communities within 10 miles of the nuclear plants. That Task Force has been created and will have its first meeting May 26, 1983. I expect this will be a productive forum where we can assess our needs and strengths and move toward a unified solution with the utilities and the State of New York.

On March 24, 1983, I testified before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board of your honorable Commission. At that hearing, I suggested that the federal government take an active role in the evacuation portion of Emergency Response Plans for nuclear power plants, by training a unit of the federal military in radiological emergency techniques. For want of a better name, I termed that military unit the FEMA Brigade, envisioning it as perhaps attached to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Since my testimony, I have spoken to federal officials on the issue and received an endorsement of the proposal from Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) who will introduce legislation to allow for the creation of such a group. This past week, New York Governor Mario Cuomo and New York State Health Commissioner Dr. David Axelrod endorsed the concept of the federal military assisting in evacuations around nuclear power plants.

Westchester County will continue to pursue the cause of federal military involvement, in any of its permutations, as an added precaution in the event of a serious nuclear accident. While we will continue to work with the utilities, the state, the bus companies, bus drivers, municipal officials and emergency workers, we believe the federal government has a requisite role in emergency planning for nuclear power plant accidents.

Together with Governor Cuomo and our local officials, we will seek federal resources in the solution of problems surrounding nuclear power plants which the federal government licenses and allows to remain open. As you know, counties all across the country are duplicating efforts in creating emergency plans for nuclear accidents. I believe the creation of a "FEMA Brigade" or unit like it, would save taxpayers enormous amounts of money, save local governments enormous amounts of time and resources, and finally would bring some peace of mind to the millions of citizens who live within 10 - 50 miles of the 71 operating nuclear power plants in the United States.

The policy of Westchester County has been one of consistently attempting to assure the safety of our citizens. We feel that we have taken the proper first steps to assure that goal.