



NUCLEAR SECURITY COALITION

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Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility
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Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Citizens' Regulatory Commission
Citizens Resistance at Fermi II
Clean Water Action
Connecticut Coalition Against Millstone
Earth Care
EFMR Monitoring
Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power
Finger Lakes Citizens for the Environment
Georgians Against Nuclear Energy
Greenpeace
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Independent Environmental Conservation &
Activism Network
Institute for Resource and Security Studies
Justice Through Peace Initiative
Kids Against Pollution
Lakeshore Environmental Action
Massachusetts Citizens Awareness Network
Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group
Nebraskans for Peace
New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution
New Jersey Public Interest Research Group
North American Water Office
New York Public Interest Research Group
North Carolina Waste Awareness & Reduction
Network
Nuclear Energy Information Service
Nuclear Free Vermont
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
People's Environmental Network of New York
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Pilgrim Watch
Plymouth County Nuclear Information Committee
Public Citizen
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San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace
Sierra Club
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
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Three Mile Island Alert
Union of Concerned Scientists
UNPLUG Salem
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NEWS RELEASE

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Science Panel Confirms Risk to Nuclear Pools, Calls Suppression of Study Unprecedented

Citizen Coalition Urges NRC to Release Report, Take Action

WASHINGTON, DC – In the midst of a scandal over a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report on security of high-level nuclear waste, the Nuclear Security Coalition, comprised of 47 grassroots and public interest groups across the nation, reiterated today that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) must release the unclassified report as NAS prepared it. The group also insisted NRC take action on a formal petition filed last August to reduce the threat against 32 particularly vulnerable power plants. Those boiling water reactors, representing nearly a third of all U.S. plants, store their waste fuel in densely packed pools high above ground with no substantial protection.

“NRC claims the waste pools aren’t vulnerable to catastrophic attacks. If that were true, then why are they holding the NAS study hostage?” asked the Nuclear Security Coalition’s Deb Katz. **“We urge NRC to take action and make all waste storage facilities safer, starting with the most vulnerable.”**

The Academy spoke out this week regarding the Bush administration’s withholding the release of the scientists’ study on risks from storing “spent” nuclear fuel rods at the nation’s power plants. In a top story in Monday’s *Washington Post*, NAS head E. William Colglazier said the science panel had never encountered such hurdles in releasing a report, and warned that the public, governors and other leaders need to learn about NAS’ findings. Experts from Princeton, MIT and elsewhere have previously identified the pools as unparalleled in terms of potential social and economic devastation should they be attacked.

Since last June, NRC has blocked release of an unclassified version of the NAS study, citing security concerns. But last week, David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists unearthed a March 14th letter from NRC meant to rebut the NAS study. In the letter, NRC

(more)

Chairman Nils Diaz revealed a major part of NAS' findings, showing that the science panel recommends "earlier movement of spent fuel from [cooling] pools into dry storage..." to reduce risks of a catastrophic nuclear fire.

On March 16, the citizen coalition charged that NRC is blocking the study's release because the industry disagrees with the report's negative findings, rather than legitimate security concerns. Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), who has seen both classified and unclassified versions of the report, echoed that concern several days later. Maintaining a public perception that nuclear waste storage can be done cheaply and safely is key to the nuclear industry's current efforts to expand for the first time in over twenty-five years.

The Coalition is pressing Congress to order release of the NAS study and mandate safer storage of the highly radioactive waste, starting with the 32 GE reactors that are most vulnerable. NSC has asked for a meeting directly with NRC's five commissioners to discuss the citizens' pending petition, after months of NRC indecision.

"All credible science has validated our years-long insistence to lower the density of these radioactive pools," said NSC member Jim Warren of North Carolina WARN. **"The public is being flooded with extreme propaganda arguing that we must start building more nuclear power plants. That's a different debate, and it can't come by sacrificing the urgent, prudent demand to safeguard the thousands of tons of deadly waste already on hand."** He emphasized that the waste pools represent a vital public safety issue, and can no longer be suppressed by the nuclear industry.

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To view the Nuclear Security Coalition's petition to the NRC, visit <http://www.citizen.org/documents/BWRpetitionannex.pdf>. To view the Coalition's call to release the NAS study, visit http://www.citizen.org/cmep/energy_enviro_nuclear/nuclear_power_plants/reactor_safety/articles.cfm?ID=13125.