



NUCLEAR INFORMATION AND RESOURCE SERVICE

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AMERICAN NUCLEAR SOCIETY IS RIGHT TO SAY U.S. NUCLEAR EMERGENCY PLANNING INADEQUATE-- BUT WRONG ON SOLUTIONS

PETITION FOR RULEMAKING NOW BEFORE NRC WOULD EXPAND EPZ ZONES, REQUIRE EMERGENCY DRILLS TO INCLUDE NATURAL DISASTER SCENARIOS

A report issued by the industry's American Nuclear Society (ANS) today on the one-year lessons of the Fukushima nuclear accident acknowledges that emergency planning regulations for nuclear power sites in the U.S. need improvement. The ANS called for a "more risk-informed approach" to emergency planning and suggested that Emergency Planning Zones be customized for each reactor site, according to an Associated Press article today.

"It is rare for Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS) to agree with ANS," said Michael Mariotte, executive director of NIRS, "but in this case we do agree that current emergency evacuation regulations are inadequate. That's why, on February 15, 2012, NIRS—joined by 37 organizations from across the U.S.—submitted a formal Petition for Rulemaking to the NRC. That petition calls for a new approach to emergency planning based on the real-world experience of the Fukushima and Chernobyl nuclear disasters."

Dominique French of NIRS, the lead author of the petition, explained, "Our new approach to emergency planning would establish a three-tiered system. The current 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone and all its requirements would be expanded to 25 miles around each reactor site. A new zone would be established that would encompass the area from 25-50 miles around each site. Utilities would have to identify and inform the public about evacuation routes in the event of an emergency, but would not have to conduct full-scale evacuation drills within this area. The current 50-mile ingestion pathway—used to determine whether interdiction of food and liquids is required—would be expanded to 100 miles around each reactor site. Finally, the petition would require that emergency evacuation drills include a scenario that includes a regionally-appropriate initiating or concurrent natural disaster, such as an earthquake, tornado, hurricane, etc."

2700 additional organizations and individuals have since sent letters to the NRC asking to be added as co-petitioners to the Petition for Rulemaking. The petition has been docketed by the

NRC as PRM-50-104 and is expected to be published in the Federal Register for public comment soon.

At Fukushima, mandatory evacuations were undertaken in a 12-mile zone around the Fukushima Daiichi site and the government recommended evacuation within 18 miles. But to the northwest of the reactor site, where the heaviest fallout landed, people in villages 25 miles from the site were evacuated. But it could have been far worse: an estimated 80% of the airborne radiation released at Fukushima was blown over the Pacific Ocean, rather than over the population of Japan, according to an October 2011 study by the Norwegian Institute for Air Research.

Even so, the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission and U.S. State Department recommended at the height of the Fukushima radiation releases that U.S. citizens evacuate from within 50 miles of the Fukushima Daiichi site.

The 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident caused establishment of a permanent 18-mile radius exclusion zone, and villages more than 100 miles away were permanently evacuated.

“We can’t rely on favorable wind patterns to protect the people of the United States in the event of a nuclear accident,” said Mariotte. “The prudent course is to learn from the real-world experience of Fukushima and Chernobyl and act now to improve our emergency planning and response capability.”

NIRS petition for rulemaking is available here:

<http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/emergency/petitionforrulemaking22012.pdf>

Background information on emergency planning is available here:

<http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/emergency/emergencyhome.htm>

The American Nuclear Society report referred to is available here:

http://fukushima.ans.org/report/Fukushima_report.pdf

An Associated Press article on the ANS report is available here:

<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2012/03/08/panel-recommends-us-customize-nuclear-power-plant-emergency-plans/>

This press release is available here:

<http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/emergency/epzrelease3812.pdf>