

# **Opponents to Palisades Nuclear Power Plant 20 Year License Extension Cite Brittle Reactor as Catastrophic Risk**

Operating the 35 year old Palisades nuclear power plant for 25 more years  
risks rupture of the highly embrittled reactor vessel  
and catastrophic radiation release into the Great Lakes Basin

The owner (Jackson, Michigan-based Consumers Energy Company, a subsidiary of CMS) and operator (Hudson, Wisconsin-based Nuclear Management Company, LLC) of the Palisades nuclear power plant in Covert (just seven miles south of South Haven, on the Lake Michigan shoreline in southwestern Michigan) has applied to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for a 20 year extension to its original 40 year license.

But concerned citizens fear 20 more years risks a catastrophic accident. Palisades is perhaps the most embrittled reactor vessel in the United States. Neutron radiation from the nuclear chain reaction in the reactor core has seriously impacted the metal's ductility. If, during an emergency, cooling water is pumped into the thermally hot and highly pressurized reactor core, the "pressurized thermal shock" (PTS) could rupture the brittle reactor vessel like a hot glass under cold water, releasing catastrophic amounts of radioactivity into the air and waters of Lake Michigan, the source of drinking water (and so much more) to tens of millions of people downstream.

Given the severe risks stemming from Palisades' embrittlement, a growing coalition, comprising dozens of environmental and public interest organizations representing well over 200,000 Michigan citizens, opposes the 20 year license extension (see list of groups, below).

Palisades also has a serious waste problem. Electricity is but a fleeting byproduct from the reactor. The actual product is forever deadly high-level radioactive waste. Palisades' indoor waste storage pool was full in 1993. Ever since, the overflowing waste has been stored in outdoor concrete/steel silos on sand dunes just 150 yards from Lake Michigan. The pads under these casks are in violation of earthquake regulations. A quake could send the waste into the Lake. Thus Palisades has no safe place to store its wastes. A first step towards solving this growing waste problem at Palisades is to stop making it in the first place, as by preventing the 20 year license extension.

The Palisades reactor presents many additional problems. The NRC allows it to emit harmful radioactivity and toxic chemicals into the air and water on a daily basis, as a part of "routine" operations. This threatens to contaminate the recently installed drinking water supply intake for the City of South Haven built offshore from Van Buren State Park, immediately downstream from the Palisades reactor. Also, Palisades has troubling environmental justice problems. Palisades is located in a predominantly African American and low income township and participates in the industry-wide targeting of Native American lands out west for high-level radioactive waste dumps, such as the proposed national dump at Yucca Mountain, Nevada on Western Shoshone Indian lands.

Aside from embrittlement, the Palisades reactor suffers widespread age-related deterioration and degradation, threatening equipment failures that could exacerbate the embrittlement problem, or lead to a major accident even if the reactor vessel itself never ruptured.

For all these reasons, a coalition of concerned citizens and organizations is actively opposing this dangerous 20 year license extension at the Palisades reactor. On August 8th, dozens of local residents officially intervened before the NRC against the license extension and requested a formal adjudicatory hearing on the matter.

Concerned individuals and organizations are urged to add their names to this growing coalition effort. To add your individual and/or group name to those opposing the 20 year license extension at Palisades nuclear power plant, and to learn more ways you and your group can help, please contact Kevin Kamps (a board member of Don't Waste Michigan) at Nuclear Information and Resource Service at 202.328.0002 ext. 14 or [kevin@nirs.org](mailto:kevin@nirs.org).

(continued→)

List of organizations opposing 20 year license extension at Palisades nuclear power plant:

Jamie Morton, **Alliance for the Great Lakes**, Grand Haven, Michigan

Grant Smith, **Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana**, Indianapolis, Indiana

Philip Lane Tanton, Director, **Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination**, Mattawan, Michigan

Ziggy Kleinau, **Citizens for Renewable Energy** (CFRE), Lion's Head, Ontario

Cyndi Roper, **Clean Water Action**, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Michael Keegan, **Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes**, Monroe, Michigan

Alice Hirt, **Don't Waste Michigan**, Holland, Michigan

John Jackson, **Great Lakes United**, Buffalo, New York

Sylvia Inwood, Chair, **Green Party of Michigan**, Detroit, Michigan

Chuck Jordan, **Green Party of Van Buren County**, Bangor, Michigan

Dayle Harrison, **Kalamazoo River Protection Association**, Saugatuck, Michigan

Ellen Leik, **League of Women Voters of the Holland Area**, Holland, Michigan

Terry Swier, **Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation**, Mecosta, Michigan

James Clift, **Michigan Environmental Council (MEC)**, Lansing, Michigan

Maynard Kaufman, **Michigan Land Trustees**, Bangor, Michigan

Vicki Levengood, Michigan Representative, **National Environmental Trust**, Lansing, Michigan

David Kraft, **Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS)**, Evanston, Illinois

Keith Gunter, **Nuclear-Free Great Lakes Campaign**, Livonia, Michigan

Kevin Kamps, **Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS)**, Washington, D.C.

John LaForge, **Nukewatch**, Luck, Wisconsin

Mike Shriberg, **Public Interest Research Group in Michigan (PIRGIM)**, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Henry Peters, **Radiological Evaluation & Action Project, Great Lakes (REAP-GL)**, Ewen, Michigan

Anna Holden, **Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter**, Lansing, Michigan

Clare Mead Rosen, **WAND Michigan (Women's Action for New Directions)**, Southfield, Michigan

Thomas Leonard, **West Michigan Environmental Action Council**, Grand Rapids, Michigan

(updated March 22, 2006)