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NRC Seems Hell-Bent on TMI Restart

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission hosted a “hybrid” meeting on Constellation’s plan to restart TMI Unit 1 at Penn State’s Harrisburg campus on the evening of February 19. There were about 100 people in the audience and an undisclosed number online, who patiently waited for a chance to give their views on the restart of this “zombie” nuclear plant.

Proponents of restart included local politicians, representatives from various unions whose members might work at bringing the plant back on line or operating it, local business representatives, and area residents with short memories or birthdates after 1979. But even some of them voiced concerns about Constellation’s ability to meet updated radiation exposure limits.

Opponents of restart included many survivors of the Unit 2 meltdown, citizens who voiced mistrust that the plant could safely be restarted, and one woman who lives downstream of the plant, Liz Fulton, who said she felt like a “guinea pig” for the nuclear industry.

Questions were raised about the hundreds of tons of nuclear waste currently stored on the island, the lack of any benefits to the rate payers who paid for the construction of the plant, the inability for plant



NRC Representatives at February 19 meeting at PSU-Harrisburg.

neighbors to buy homeowner’s insurance to financially protect themselves in the event of another accident, and why the NRC was so confident a plant that hasn’t operated in many years could be restarted.

Longtime safe-energy advocate Eric Epstein who attended online noted that Microsoft has agreed to buy all the electricity the plant generates, the federal government has agreed to a billion-dollar loan to finance the restart, but local residents carry all the risk. “The nuclear industry creates more terrorist

targets, more nuclear waste, less safety, less security, and leaves fewer resources available for investing in safe-energy.” Epstein subsequently reported the fuel for Unit 1 has already been ordered and scheduled for delivery, but a TMI Alert effort will prevent them from fueling the reactor until at least July.

Despite all the questions raised, the NRC representatives sounded more like champions of nuclear power than regulators thereof. They seemed immensely confident the plant could be and would be restarted and operated safely. Time will tell.

In this newsletter you’ll find

- The former head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission thinks TMI will never restart
- TMI Alert Remembers Jesse Jackson
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- Nuclear plants cause cancer!
- 47 Years after the accident, TMI Alert’s mantra is still
“Better Active Today than Radioactive Tomorrow”

Former Trump Administration FERC Chairman Says TMI-1 Won't Restart

Indranil “Neil” Chatterjee, who served as Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) during the first Trump Administration, wrote an opinion piece for *The Hill* in which he wrote that TMI Unit 1 will never be restarted because “there are too many regulatory, material, and logistical hurdles to overcome.”

Chatterjee points out that a fully shut-down nuclear power plant has never been restarted in America. He notes

that historically nuclear plants go over budget and past schedule during construction in part due to the regulatory hurdles the plants must clear. As the head of FERC he said, “I have seen firsthand how red tape can choke even the best-intentioned projects under goodwill regulators. Reactors that were permanently shut down must go through an extensive regulatory review process and request special exemptions for both their operations and use of radioactive fuel.”

He notes that even though Trump’s Department of Energy supports the restart, to ensure safety TMI “will also have to pass rigorous rounds of inspections, receive environmental approval, and get the green light from the likes of the Environmental Protection Agency, the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, FERC, and other state and local officials.” Chatterjee notes that “even under a pro-business, pro-energy, regulation slashing Trump Administration, this is quite a gauntlet — especially because pro-nuclear government officials may nevertheless be hemmed in by existing laws and review processes outside of their control.”

He says these regulatory barriers are just the start. “Nuclear reactors can’t be simply switched back on like a light bulb. They’re more like a car left undriven in a garage for too long with old oil, putrid gasoline, rat-chewed wires and a rusty frame — except that nuclear plants are infinitely more complicated than any car. At Three Mile Island the reactor vessel could be brittle and fatigued. The core rods may need to be refurbished, the steam generators might have corroded, the turbines may break after not being rotated for years.” He also points out that the current owners of TMI partially removed part of the cooling towers because of a fire risk.

TMI Alert Remembers Jesse Jackson



Over the years, because of the accident at TMI, local safe energy activists got to meet celebrated figures like Pete Seeger, Jane Fonda, Bonnie Raitt, and others committed to the cause of safe energy. But Jesse Jackson stood alongside some 100 of us at a 4AM vigil marking the 5th anniversary of the beginning of the accident. That morning, March 28, 1984, in pouring rain at the TMI plant gate, to the cheers of the rain-soaked activists he said, “It is time to put the nuclear industry on notice that its callous disregard for our rights will no longer be tolerated.” He was accompanied that morning by Barry Commoner, the author of *The Poverty of Power*, who was advising him on energy and environmental matters.

Proximity to Nuclear Power Plants

Associated With Increased Cancer Mortality

U.S. counties located closer to operational nuclear power plants (NPPs) have higher rates of cancer mortality than those located farther away, according to a new study led by Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

The study is the first of the 21st century to analyze proximity to NPPs and cancer mortality across all NPPs and every U.S. county. The researchers emphasized that the findings are not enough to establish causality but do highlight the need for further research into nuclear power's health impacts.

The study was published February 23, 2026 in *Nature Communications*.

Numerous studies on the potential link between NPPs and cancer have been conducted around the world, with conflicting results. In the U.S., these studies have been rare and limited in their scope, focused on a single NPP and its surrounding community.

To expand the evidence base, the researchers conducted a national assessment of NPPs and cancer mortality between 2000 and 2018 using "continuous proximity." They used advanced statistical modeling that captured the cumulative impact of all nearby NPPs, rather than just one. The locations and dates of operation of U.S. NPPs—as well as some nearby in Canada—were obtained from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and county-level data on cancer mortality was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The researchers controlled for

potential confounders in each county, including educational attainment, median household income, racial composition, average temperature and relative humidity, smoking prevalence, BMI, and proximity to the nearest hospital.

The study found that U.S. counties located closer to NPPs experienced higher cancer mortality rates, even after accounting for socioeconomic, environmental, and health care factors. The researchers estimated that over the course of the study period, roughly 115,000 cancer deaths across the U.S. (or about 6,400 deaths per year) were attributable to proximity to NPPs. The association was strongest among older adults.

"Our study suggests that living near a NPP may carry a measurable cancer risk—one

that lessens with distance," said senior author Petros Koutrakis, Akira Yamaguchi Professor of Environmental Health and Human Habitation. "We recommend that more studies be done that address the issue of NPPs and health impacts, particularly at a time when nuclear power is being promoted as a clean solution to climate change."

The researchers noted that the results are consistent with the results of a similar study they conducted in Massachusetts, which identified elevated cancer incidence among populations living closer to NPPs. They also noted some limitations to the study, including that it did not incorporate direct radiation measurements and instead assumed equal impact by all NPPs.

HELP WANTED

As a safe-energy activist you may have experience as a "protestor" or "demonstrator." There's a "No Kings Rally" at Noon on March 28 on the Capitol steps. Despite what you may have heard from the Trump Administration, No Kings demonstrators are not paid, they're just pissed. You're welcome to join in the fun. No experience necessary.

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TMI Alert, 315 Peffer Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102

Trump Executive Order Generates Anxiety

Shortly after being sworn in for his second term, President Trump signed Executive Order 14300 aimed at accelerating the construction of nuclear power plants in the United States. Not only does the order direct the NRC to streamline its rules to take no more than 18 months to approve applications for new reactors, it also urges the agency to consider lowering its safety limits for radiation exposure, saying that current rules go beyond what is needed to protect human health.

For years, the U.S. regulated the amount of radiation people may be exposed to using something called the linear no-threshold model (LNT) which says that every additional dose of ionizing radiation, however small, adds a small risk to health. It's a simple equation that describes the relationship between dose and risk. For decades it has anchored radiation dose limits for both the public and radiation workers.

Katy Huff, writing in *Scientific American*, says, "As a

nuclear energy advocate and former Department of Energy official, I want to see more nuclear energy on the grid soon. But loosening the protections of the linear no-threshold (LNT) model is not supported by current research. Some experts warn that relaxing it could especially place women and children at higher risk of damage from radiation."

At the NRC's public meeting at Penn State Harrisburg on February 19, the retired Director of the Bureau of Radiation Protection at the state's Department of Environmental Resources, David Allard, also voiced concerns over the relaxing of the safety limits for radiation exposure.

As we were going to press, the NRC had a meeting scheduled to consider how to implement Executive Order 14300 on March 12 and will be accepting comments until April 2. For more information or to submit a comment, visit <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/governing-laws/advance-act>

TMI Steam Tubes Likely to Fail

During short- to medium-shutdowns, a nuclear plant's steam generator tubes must be filled with chemically treated water to prevent corrosion by creating a stable, oxygen-free environment, often requiring periodic circulation (either via heating or pumping) to maintain chemical uniformity and prevent stratification. Aptly, this is known as a "wet blanket."

During a shutdown, the water in the steam tubes is largely stagnant. If not properly treated, differences in temperature (warm water above cooler water) and/or chemical composition (oxygen content, boron, impurities, or pH) can cause the water to separate into distinct layers instead of remaining uniform. These layers can persist for longer periods of time leading to corrosion, pitting, or cracking. Keeping the tubes filled with properly treated water circulating would prevent such stratification problems.

TMI was shut in 2019 and the steam generators were not protected in this manner.

NRC Approves Extension for Peach Bottom Decommissioning

In December the NRC granted Constellation a one-time exemption to allow the licensee an "alternative" decommissioning schedule "that requires the decommissioning of Peach Bottom Unit 1, 60 years after the permanent cessation of operations of either Peach Bottom Units 2 or 3, whichever is earlier, and in no case beyond 2074."

The plant was supposed to be decommissioned in 2034. Now, Peach Bottom 1 will not be cleaned up until 100 years after it ceased to operate. Peach Bottom, Unit 1, was a 70 MW, high temperature, gas cooled reactor that was operated from June of 1967 to its final shutdown on October 31, 1974. The plant is a relic from the Atoms for Peace

Program (1953) and it remains in the rate base. The spent fuel was shipped to a Department of Energy facility in Idaho. The reactor vessel, primary system piping, and steam generators remain in place. The technology for decommission the plant does not exist, and it is the first reactor for which an extension for decommissioning was sought.

TMI Unit 2 Likely to be Around for Accident's 100th Anniversary

At an early March meeting of the TMI-2 Community Advisory Panel, it was revealed that the damaged nuclear plant may still be with us on the 100th anniversary of the accident, if not longer.

At the March 4 meeting, Laszlo von Lazor, the TMI-2 Project Director, and James "Jimmy" Harris, the TMI-2 Waste Manager, reported that on March 31 the TMI-2Solutions team will be filing a request for a 60-Year Exemption, which means they'll have an additional 60 years to clean-up the plant that went off-line in 1979. March 31st is also TMI-2Solutions deadline for filing its Annual Decommissioning Funding Status Report with the NRC. It was reported at the meeting that the funds, thanks to a booming stock market, are in good shape. According to the NRC, the report will likely be posted on the "public section" of their website, nrc.gov, a couple of weeks after its receipt.

In the first phase of the project, over the last two years

TMI-2Solutions has been diligently cleaning up the mess inside of the reactor. In 2025 the team had 55 shipments of hazardous waste leave the island, some 39,500 cubic feet of radioactive debris. In the first quarter of 2026 they sent off another 31 shipments of the high-level wastes, as well as 48 shipments of low-level wastes. This phase of the clean-up will continue until all of the radioactive materials are removed. After which the project, according to the Dwight Shearer, the Director of Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Radiation Protection, will enter Phase 2 and "will look like a normal decommissioning program."

Phase 2 of the Unit 2 decommissioning project will be the tearing down of almost all of Unit 2's structures such as the cooling towers, turbine building, and the reactor itself. One building, the fuel handling building, is a shared structure used by both units, so it will remain. However, being

the team estimates Unit 1 will be restarted by the time they get to Phase 2, Harris said it wouldn't be safe to be demolishing structures so proximate to an operating nuclear plant. Given that, the final demolition of Unit 2 would have to wait for the decommissioning of Unit 1. The earliest possible date for the clean-up to be completed is 2074. It is likely that no one who evacuated the mid-state during the 1979 accident will be alive to see a horizon that doesn't include TMI 2's cooling towers.

What will survive the demolition, it was reported, will be some panels from Unit 2's control room. Thanks to the world-famous 1979 meltdown, TMI was designated as an historic site by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Some of Unit 2's control room panels will be removed for eventual display at a site to be determined by the state's Historical and Museum Commission. Tell your greatgrandkids.

But not for long

Shapiro Lawsuit Saves Pennsylvanians \$1.6 Billion

Gov. Shapiro joined a number of eastern and midwestern governors in filing a complaint against the PJM Interconnect (the regional grid operator) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission which resulted in savings to Commonwealth rate payers of \$1.6 billion.

At issue was PJM's 2025-26 capacity auction which resulted in costs of \$14.7 billion, representing a more than 800% increase from the prior year and

threatening to unnecessarily increasing consumer costs more than \$20 billion.

In January 2025 a settlement was negotiated and approved by FERC in April, lowering the auction price cap from over \$500 per MegaWatt Day to \$329 per MegaWatt Day. The settlement saves consumers \$8.3 billion across the region, with 13 million Pennsylvanians saving \$1.6 billion, averaging \$116 per household. Sadly, these savings could be erased

by a rate increase PP&L is proposing that would add \$156 to the average residential bill.

In the new case, PPL is seeking an additional \$356.3 million annual revenue increase, approximately a 7% increase or an additional \$13 per month on residential bills. TMI Alert is litigating the case to monitor regulations for data centers and reduce the amount of the rate increase.

NRC Approves Construction of Bill Gates' Nuke

On March 4 the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) approved its first construction permit for a nuclear power plant in eight years, which will allow a Bill Gates-backed company to build the country's first commercial Sodium Fast Reactor (SFR) power plant in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

Unlike the water-cooled reactors used since the beginning of the nuclear age, these plants utilize highly flammable liquid sodium as a coolant. The reactor's construction permit application, which was submitted in March 2024, was originally scheduled for completion by the

NRC in August 2026, but was expedited because of political pressure from the Trump administration and Congress in order to comply with an 18-month timeline established in President Trump's Executive Order 14300.

The two risks with this technology are if it works reliably long term and the costs. How these turn out will determine the viability of the Gates-backed reactor.

Edwin Lyman, nuclear safety director for the Union of Concerned Scientists, said, "The NRC's rush to complete the Kemmerer plant's safety evaluation to meet the recklessly abbreviated

schedule dictated by President Trump represents a complete abandonment of its obligation to protect public health, safety, and the environment from catastrophic nuclear power plant accidents or terrorist attacks." He went on to say the only way for the NRC to pull this off was "by sweeping difficult safety issues under the rug or putting them off until the operating license phase."

Construction of the \$4 billion plant will take until 2030. By then we'll know if the shelved safety issues will be addressed by the NRC in the operating licensing process.

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