CHESAPEAKE SAFE ENERGY COALITION

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information:
Johanna Neumann (410) 467-9389

Coalition Challenges Safety of Nuclear Reactor Site

Calvert Cliffs Evacuation Plan Flawed, Inadequate

Solomons – Citizens and experts held a news conference overlooking the Thomas Johnson Memorial Bridge today to expose weaknesses in the emergency evacuation strategy for the area around the Calvert Cliffs nuclear power plant and to present evidence that a new nuclear reactor in Southern Maryland, as proposed by Constellation Energy, puts area residents at even greater risk.

"How can we even think about building a third reactor when we can't handle an emergency evacuation from two?" said CalvertCounty resident Bob Boxwell.

Critical flaws in the evacuation plan identified by experts include:

- Transit bottlenecks: The Thomas Johnson Memorial Bridge, the sole evacuation route for residents on the southern half of the Calvert peninsula, is a bottleneck even under normal conditions. Calvert County has one main four-lane road, Maryland State Highway (MD) 2/4, bisecting the county north to south, which would serve as the northern evacuation route. Currently, there are 50,000 residents who live in the 10-mile radius evacuation zone that would have to traverse these limited capacity roads to exit the high risk area.
- No siren back-up: The emergency sirens intended to alert residents in case of an accident are powered by the off-site power grid and lack a back-up power source. Loss of off-site power could lead to an accident requiring the sirens to be activated, but when needed most, the sirens would not work.
- Emergency responder attrition: Sociologists studying the Three Mile Island nuclear accident of 1979 documented that the entire spectrum of first responders -- from emergency medical technicians to doctors, nurses, and emergency room staff -- exhibited "role conflict," either delaying or entirely abandoning their assigned responsibilities during the disaster, in order to tend to their own personal or family's needs.

Research conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists suggests that nuclear reactors are at their highest risk levels when first constructed -- their “break in” phase -- and as they degrade with age and enter their “break down” phase. The two reactors currently at Calvert Cliffs were the first in the country to have had their original 40 year licenses extended by an additional 20 years beyond originally intended.

“A brand new untested reactor design coupled with two aging reactors at Calvert Cliffs could be a perfect storm for a catastrophic radioactivity release,” said Beyond Nuclear’s Kevin Kamps.

“The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has reported that a major accident at either of Calvert Cliffs’ current reactors would kill or injure over 43,000 people,” said Dr. Gwen DuBois, a Baltimore medical doctor and spokesperson for Physicians for Social Responsibility. “A giant new reactor, and the inadequate emergency preparedness, would create the possibility for an even worse medical disaster,” she added.

“Terrorists are not known to target wind turbines,” said by David Kosmos, Program Associate for Maryland PIRG. “Constellation Energy should turn its back on dangerous nuclear power and invest in safe 21st century technology that will lead us towards a clean and safe energy future.”

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