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Davis-Besse opponents, "It can happen here."

Two weeks ago, four citizens groups were in Port Clinton, arguing before a panel appointed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that Davis-Besse should not be allowed to continue running for twenty years beyond its designed operating life. Today, in the wake of the nuclear disasters unfolding in Japan those groups had a stark warning for Ohio, Michigan and even Ontario. "It can happen here."

"It's ironic that in court, just two weeks ago, we were told repeatedly that we are not allowed to bring up the 'worst case scenario' of a plant meltdown because the NRC has decided that such a meltdown just can't happen," said Joseph DeMare member of the Wood County Green Party and long time nuclear foe. "Well, guess what? It's happened. It's important to point out that many of the people evacuated in Japan who are leaving behind their homes, clothes, even their pets, may never be able to return," said Mr. DeMare, "since some radioactive pollution, like Plutonium, stays deadly for tens of thousands of years."

"Just last week, all trains of the Davis-Besse Emergency Feedwater were knocked off line by the simple act of someone turning on a two-way radio," pointed out Michael J. Keegan of Don't Waste Michigan. Interference from a hand held radio disrupted the electronics in an incident reported to the NRC last week (Event Number 46653). The Emergency Feedwater was restored by First Energy. "But if that had happened during an emergency shut down, and those systems were needed and not available, the headlines today could be about the evacuation of Toledo, not Japan," said Mr. Keegan.

"There are many other triggers which could take a reactor into a Station Black Out (SBO) and loss of back up power such as Emergency Diesel Generators (EDG's). For example, in November of 1972, Davis-Besse was heavily flooded by a seiche event. In a seiche, strong winds cause large bodies of waters like Lake Erie to pour over their banks in a large wave. Fortunately, the plant had not yet started up. That same flood after start up could have been devastating.

"Other problems that have actually disrupted operations at local nuclear plants include:
tornadoes, which struck Davis-Besse 1998 and Fermi II in 2010;
an unexplained electrical explosion at Davis-Besse in 2010;
a stuck crane which dangled a 110 ton container full of highly radioactive waste mid-air directly over an irradiated fuel storage pool for 55 hours at Palisades nuclear plant on the Lake Michigan

shoreline;
the electrical grid failure in August 2003; and
an Emergency Diesel Generator that was unavailable at Fermi for 20 years from 1986 through 2006 .

All nuclear reactors are also vulnerable to terrorist attack. On May 25, 2002, according to NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) a plane circled Fermi II and dipped close to the reactor.

There are many other examples. So, while an earthquake may be unlikely, we have already experienced a multitude of near misses which could have triggered a major nuclear disaster in the Great Lakes."

"This is my home that I'm fighting for," added Anita Rios, Co-Chair of the Ohio Green Party and resident of Toledo. "I raised my family in the shadow of that plant, and I don't want them to have to live in fear of an accident as I have. To say that 'Oh it can never happen' in light of what is happening in Japan is just plain crazy. First Energy has down played and low balled the expense required to deal with a catastrophic event, and minimized the extent of the area that would be affected. We should point out that taxpayers would bear the responsibility of paying for a catastrophic event."

Terry Lodge, a long time opponent of a Davis-Besse and the lawyer representing the groups opposing the relicensing, had this to add, "Those of us who have been watching the nuclear industry have always known that a meltdown was only a matter of time. Regardless of reactor type, with aging comes pipe cracking, defects in zirconium cladding on the fuel rods, pump and valve failures, corrosion holes, rusting electrical switches and junctions, and failing backup diesel generators. The current Generic Environmental Impact Statement for relicensing US nukes is more than 14 years old. We are about to see huge areas of Japan made off-limits to human habitation for generations to come. The economic costs of this disaster are grossly understated. We, of course, prayed that it would never happen and our hearts go out to the people of Japan. But the question for us here in Ohio is are we willing to lose Toledo, Port Clinton, Bowling Green, Sandusky, and all the surrounding communities just so that First Energy can make more money?"

"We call for a moratorium on re-licensing of aged nuclear plants, and a moratorium on licensing of additional plants," concluded Ms. Rios, "and we ask that local governments and officials join us in calling for such a moratorium."

The four groups are Beyond Nuclear, Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, Don't Waste Michigan, and the Green Party of Ohio.