Are Nuclear Plants Terrorist Targets?

How Does the Industry Respond?

Our nation's nuclear reactors and their waste are our greatest vulnerability. By attacking ill-prepared nuclear facilities, terrorists could exploit their inherent weaknesses and symbolic value to cause widespread chaos, devastation, and suffering.

US intelligence agencies acknowledge continuing threats to the American infrastructure yet the Bush Administration and its War on Terrorism ignore the... reactor communities and their surrounding regions. Power plants and industrial facilities must be protected as never before.

• The nuclear industry responds to the prospect of terrorist attack as a public relations problem. It attempts to conceal the grim reality of increased vulnerability that reactor communities live with.
• The industry wants to solve the problem by transporting waste to proposed dumps in the western US. This increases risk by creating thousands of "dirty bombs" rolling on highways and railroads through towns, cities, and farms.
• Further, even if a dump were sited, waste would remain at reactors for decades.

Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS)

• HOSS would reduce the risk and consequences of an attack.
• HOSS is necessary at both operating and closed reactors because irradiated (spent) fuel is stored at both.

• Presently, most nuclear waste is stored in pools of water that could not withstand a terrorist attack. These pools are not designed to limit radioactive releases.
• The industry has no viable long-term solution to the waste problem. Further, it also does not have a viable response to the threat of terrorist attack.

Can Nuclear Sites Be Protected?

The priority is protection of nuclear reactors and waste sites.

The first step is to reduce the density of storable fuel in storage pools. The next step is to store waste in hardened casks.

Creating Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS)

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• HOSS would reduce the risk and consequences of an attack.

What Risks Do Reactors Pose?

• There are 65 reactor sites with spent fuel pools across the nation.
• These sites are located in 31 states.
• Reactor sites contain more than 1,000 times the radiation released in one Hiroshima sized atomic bomb in their spent fuel storage pools.
• Most spent fuel storage pools are not structurally protected.
• In the event of a fuel pool fire, land and property would remain useless for decades. Significantly, neither homeowner’s nor business insurance policies cover nuclear disasters, leading to potential economic devastation.