

BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

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GROUP FILES NEW LEGAL ACTION AGAINST TVA Petition Calls for New Environmental Review of Earthquake Impacts

Today the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League filed a legal challenge to require a full federal analysis of storage of irradiated fuel at the Sequoyah and Bellefonte nuclear power plants. The petition demands that NRC do a complete environmental impact statement on the effects of accidents and leakage on public health and environment. The League also filed a challenge at a power plant in Virginia.

Much of the petition is based on recent Nuclear Regulatory Commission findings which detail the impacts of a Fukushima-like accident at the Peach Bottom nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania. In the event of an accident, the NRC's study found that:

1. If a small fraction of the contents of the nuclear waste stored in fuel pools at the power plant was released to the environment, over 9,000 square miles would become uninhabitable and four million people would be evacuated for an indefinite period.
2. Similar to Fukushima, nuclear waste fuel pools in the US could be affected by reactor accidents, increasing the likelihood of fire, the first time the NRC had reached such a conclusion.
3. Reducing the concentration of irradiated nuclear fuel rods stored in pools of water and transferring them to dry storage is a safe, practical alternative.

Lou Zeller, who filed the petition for the League, said, "The NRC's study sheds light on one of the most serious problems raised during our previous legal challenges:

Earthquakes in the United States can lead to disastrous consequences at nuclear power

plants.ö Zeller continued, öThere should be no delay in removing radioactive fuel from pools of water to dry land. If successful, our petition would force power plant operator TVA to take prudent steps to reduce the danger.ö

The League joined twelve other groups who challenged 19 nuclear reactors across the country. Attorneys Diane Curran and Mindy Goldstein did much of the heavy lifting for the petition.

The NRC's study resulted from an order that the agency do a complete assessment of earthquake dangers following the 2011 meltdown at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan. Further study by the NRC is underway at the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant in Georgia.

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