

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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League Files New Safety Lawsuit Against Plant Vogtle Construction

Today the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League announced the filing of a new lawsuit against the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant in Waynesboro, Georgia. The group seeks to raise safety concerns related to a requested license amendment for Units 3 and 4 altering the ability of the steel and concrete containment structure to withstand a hydrogen explosion during a severe accident.

In their legal brief, the League states, "Five years ago, Southern Nuclear Operating Company identified a key atomic reactor safety risk: the potential for hydrogen generated from an atomic reactor meltdown to seriously damage the containment of the AP1000 atomic reactor at Vogtle Units 3 and 4....Unaccountably, four more years elapsed before the company informed NRC of this risk to the Unit 3 and 4 reactors." Presently, this risk is the subject of Southern Company's request to amend its license.

The engineering analysis which supports the League's petition indicates that the Westinghouse AP1000 nuclear reactors under construction at Vogtle are already within one pound per square inch of their design limit. The additional pressure created by a shock wave caused by burning excess hydrogen in certain areas could be devastating.

The League's brief continues, "If the NRC allows the proposed poorly designed hydrogen igniter modification to be implemented at Vogtle Units 3 and 4, a gross containment failure from a detonation shock wave in a sub-compartment is likely to

occur.ö

Charles Utley, campaign coordinator for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, said, öFor Southern Company to request such a dangerous change for the construction of Plant 3 and 4 is unacceptable. This request has raised great concern and doubt in the minds of the residents living closest to Plant Vogtle.ö

Lou Zeller, executive director of the League, said, öThe lessons learned from the hydrogen explosions that destroyed Fukushima five years ago should have been incorporated into this license before it was issued. We cannot stand by silent and allow this risk to be papered over.ö

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League filed its petition for leave to intervene and to request a hearing on the construction of Vogtle Units 3 and 4 with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission on May 2, 2016. The petition is supported by technical analysis from a nuclear engineer with thirty years of experience.

Next, the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will appoint a three-judge panel to adjudicate the matter. Other parties, including Southern Nuclear Operating Company and the NRC legal staff, have until May 27 to file their replies to the petition. Southern Company received a license to construct and operate Unites 3 and 4 from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on February 9, 2012.

The petition was filed on behalf of the Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff, a chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, with many members living within 25 miles of Plant Vogtle.

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