



Beyond Nuclear

6930 Carroll Avenue

Suite 400

Takoma Park, MD 20912

Email: paul@beyondnuclear.org

Tel. 301.270.2209

www.beyondnuclear.org

NEWS FROM BEYOND NUCLEAR

For immediate release

Contact: Paul Gunter, 301-523-0201; Susan Dancer, 979-479-0627; Karen Hadden, 512-797-8481

Credible threat of severe accident at two Texas nuclear reactors still running during Harvey, Colorado River reported cresting at Bay City, TX

TAKOMA PARK, MD, August 29, 2017 -- Watchdog groups today warned that there is “a credible threat of a severe accident” at the two nuclear reactors still operating at 100% power in Bay City, TX in the midst of severe flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey. The groups called for the immediate shutdown of the South Texas Project (STP) which sits behind an embankment that is at risk of breaching, given the unprecedented volume of water raining down in the region. “Both the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the STP operator have previously recognized a credible threat of a severe accident initiated by a breach of the embankment wall that surrounds the 7,000-acre reactor cooling water reservoir,” said Paul Gunter, Director of the Reactor Oversight Project with Beyond Nuclear in Takoma Park, MD.

A 12-mile long earth and cement dike surrounds South Texas Project’s Main Cooling Reservoir. The top of the cooling reservoir wall is between 65 and 67 feet above mean sea level, with the reactor site situated below at 29 feet above mean sea level. The NRC is not providing a status report on the water level in the reservoir where the normal maximum operating level is 49 feet above mean sea level.

A breach of the embankment wall would create an external flood potentially impacting the electrical supply from the switchyard to the reactor safety systems. This could cause high-energy electrical fires and other cascading events initiating a severe accident leading to core damage. Additionally, any significant loss of cooling water inventory in the Main Cooling Reservoir would reduce cooling capacity to the still operating reactors that could result in a meltdown.

“However remote, it’s simply prudent that the operator put this reactor into its safest condition, cold shutdown,” Gunter concluded.

“The Bay City Mayor and Matagorda County Judge have now issued mandatory evacuation orders as Bay City is expected to be ten feet under water in a flood,” said Susan Dancer, President of the South Texas Association for Responsible Energy who has had to flee her home.

“Our 911 system is down, no emergency services are available, and yet the nuclear reactors are still running. Where is the concern for employees and their families? Where is the concern for public safety?” asked Dancer. “This is an outrageous and irresponsible decision.”

Dancer recalled the “unimaginable” triple disaster in Japan in 2011 where a tsunami and earthquake combined to cripple three nuclear reactors which exploded and melted down, contaminating a wide area with radiation indefinitely and complicating rescue and evacuation efforts.

“This storm and flood is absolutely without precedent even before adding the possibility of a nuclear accident that could further imperil millions of people who are already battling for their lives,” added Dancer.

“The Colorado River is cresting extremely high and flowing at 70 times the normal rate,” said Karen Hadden, Director of SEED Coalition. “It’s expected to approach flood stage (44 feet) near Bay City today, and exceed flood stage on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Flood waters reaching the nuclear reactors could make operation increasingly dangerous and the rains are expected to continue.

“There is plenty of reserve capacity on our electric grid, so we don’t have to run the reactors in order to keep the lights on. With anticipated flooding of the Colorado River, the nuclear reactors should be shut down now to ensure safety,” Hadden said.

Utilities in Houston, San Antonio and Austin own the nuclear reactor and operate it as South Texas Project Nuclear Operating Company (STPNOC). South Texas Project is seeking to get re-licensed for 20 more years.

-30-

Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic. The Beyond Nuclear team works with diverse partners and allies to provide the public, government officials, and the media with the critical information necessary to move humanity toward a world beyond nuclear. Beyond Nuclear: 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 400, Takoma Park, MD 20912. Info@beyondnuclear.org. www.beyondnuclear.org.