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San Onofre Nuclear Crisis:
Community Members to NRC: Robust, Transparent and Thorough Investigation of Urgent Safety Problems is Essential

San Clemente, Calif. Concerned organizations and community members will today demand the NRC conduct robust, transparent and a thorough investigation into the safety problems at the San Onofre nuclear plant. Citizens group leaders and elected officials from the region will meet with the Chair of the NRC, Gregory Jaczko, following his visit to the San Onofre nuclear plant today.

The two nuclear reactors at San Onofre, operated by Southern California Edison, have been shut down for more than two months following a radiation leak and the discovery of severely damaged equipment. Tubes in all four, new steam generators at both San Onofre reactors showed significant deterioration, which could lead to a catastrophic release of radioactivity in the event of rupture. Key demands and issues that the community members will put to the NRC Chair include:

1 - As a minimum there must be a root cause analysis of the steam generator problems at both reactors – this is fundamental to understanding the scale of the damage, the causes and the actions that will be put in place to prevent and guarantee no repeat.

   “As a community we must be fully involved in this process – the root cause analysis needs to be provided to the community as soon as it is completed. The root cause must be independently verified before any talk of restart,” said Gary Headrick of San Clemente Green. “Chairman Jaczko needs to know that the citizens of Southern California are watching. We deserve answers, and we must get them before they even think about turning these reactors back on.”

2 - There needs to be a comprehensive investigation of the significant design changes of the steam generators made by Edison – why were they made, what assessment did the NRC make of these changes, including the safety implications for the reactors, and how are they going to correct their mistakes?

   “Something has gone seriously wrong at the nuclear plant and the way in which Edison conducted itself. If the Nuclear Regulatory Commission wants any credibility in this town, they need to know they can’t sweep shoddy equipment and radiation leaks under the rug. We need to see the strongest possible action by the NRC on this issue - they have an opportunity to begin to restore trust if they do the right thing.” said Gene Stone, Residents Organized for a Safe Environment (ROSE).

3 - The lessons of Fukushima are being ignored by Edison – putting the lives of millions of people at risk in California. The NRC needs to listen, understand and act.

   “Fukushima has caused huge suffering to hundreds of thousands of people in Japan. As a community we have severe trust problems with Edison and the NRC has a poor record in assuring safety of the public. We saw what happened in Japan and we are terrified of San Onofre being our Fukushima,” said Patti Davis a mother and resident in San Clemente.
4 - The nuclear problems at San Onofre are made much worse by how close the plant is to millions of people in Southern California. There are over 1400 tons of highly radioactive spent fuel on the site and a seismic fault line a few miles away. A serious accident, including from ruptured steam generator tubes, could close down I-5 and much worse.

“There is no way that public officials could possibly manage a full-blown nuclear emergency at San Onofre. Current evacuation plans appear to be totally inadequate, prescribing an evacuation zone of just 10 miles that includes about 150,000 people in San Clemente, Dana Point, San Juan Capistrano, and a number of smaller communities. Fukushima's evacuation zone ranged from 12 miles (imposed by Japanese officials) up to 50 miles (recommended by U.S. officials). A 50-mile evacuation zone around San Onofre would reach to San Diego in the south and to Long Beach in the north. It would also include all of Orange County, and big portions of Los Angeles County and the Inland Empire — potentially involving about 10 million people, depending on the extent of radioactive contamination.” said Council member Larry Agran, City of Irvine, Orange County.

5 - The San Onofre reactors need to stay shut down until all of the problems with the steam generators are understood and resolved. That means they will not be operating this summer. A plan for how to meet electricity demand has been developed by the ISO, California’s electricity grid operator, and that needs to be implemented immediately.

“Edison wants people to be talking about blackouts – but what we are talking about is nuclear blackmail,” said Donna Gilmore of SanOnofreSafety.org. “We know that Southern California is not dependent upon one nuclear power plant to keep the lights on – what needs to be done is clear from the regulators – that means not rushing an investigation into the severe problems at the plant and taking the necessary steps to assure electricity supply,” said Gilmore.

The NRC Chairman will meet with local organizations working to address the serious threats the reactors pose to the health and safety of Southern Californians and elected officials from the region at 4:45 pm Friday at the Doubletree Suites Doheny Beach Hotel, 34402 Pacific Coast Highway, Dana Point, California.

A report last week by one of the nation’s leading independent nuclear engineers revealed that serious unresolved safety problems at San Onofre could lead to significant radiation releases if the plant is allowed to restart. The paper also documented that Edison misled the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission about changes made to the plant, which have led to unforeseen and undiagnosed safety problems. The report is online at:

http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/93/fa/7/1255/Steam_Generator_Failures_at_San_Onofre.pdf

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Larry Agran, Irvine City Council member – will be available after meeting with NRC Chair
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