

PANDORA'S FALSE PROMISES

BUSTING THE PRO-NUCLEAR PROPAGANDA

A Beyond Nuclear Report www.BeyondNuclear.org

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TWO-PAGE SUMMARY

Nuclear power, no matter the reactor design, cannot address climate change in time. In order to displace a significant amount of carbon-emitting fossil-fuel generation, another 1,000 to 1,500 new 1,000+ Megawatt reactors would need to come on line worldwide by 2050, a completely prohibitive proposition.

So-called “Generation IV” reactor designs, including “fast” or “small modular reactors,” are the last gasp of a failing industry. Earlier versions of the fast breeder reactor were commercial failures and safety disasters. The ever soaring costs make nuclear power a financial quagmire for investors, and expensive new prototypes commercially unattractive.

Proponents of the Integral Fast Reactor, such as those in *Pandora's Promise*, overlook the exorbitant costs; proliferation risks; that it is decades away from deployment; that it would not so much consume radioactive waste as theoretically transmute it; and that its use of sodium as a coolant can lead to fires and explosions.

The continued daily use of nuclear energy means continued risk of radiation exposure to surrounding populations. Ionizing radiation released by nuclear power plants, either routinely or in large amounts after an accident, causes cellular damage and mutations in DNA, which in turn can lead to cancers and other illnesses. Children are particularly vulnerable and their leukemia rates have been shown to rise the closer they live to an operating nuclear power reactor.

Low-ball health predictions after nuclear accidents are not reliable. The 2005 IAEA/WHO Chernobyl report has been discredited for suppressing key data to justify low death predictions that do not stand up to scientific scrutiny. IAEA has a conflict of interest with a mandate to promote nuclear technology. Given the latency period of cancers caused by radiation exposure, it is too soon to predict the long-term health impacts of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, although some health effects are already being observed.

□ The alleged “failure” of renewable energy sources to supplant coal, oil, nuclear and natural gas in the US is less a technological defect than a result of the enormous lobbying power of the traditional energy industries. In 2008, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) spent \$2,360,000 lobbying Congress, their highest tally to date. This political barrier flies in the face of numerous studies that show wind and solar energy alone could produce orders of magnitude more electricity than currently used by US consumers and industry.

□ The example of Germany — and numerous studies — demonstrate that both coal and nuclear can be phased out in favor of renewable energy. The German renewable energy sector already employs 380,000 people compared to 30,000 in the nuclear energy sector.

□ The argument that only nuclear provides “carbon-free,” base load energy is out of date. Geothermal and offshore wind energy are capable of delivering reliable base load power with a smaller carbon footprint than nuclear energy. Energy efficiency is also an essential component in displacing nuclear and coal.

□ Myths about the French nuclear program abound. Only 4% of the country’s high-level radioactive waste has been vitrified and stored. Given its 80% dependency on nuclear power, when droughts and heat waves force reactors to power down or close, France has no other options and is forced to import electricity. France has an enormous, unsolved waste problem with no repository; a huge extra expense due to its misadventure with fast breeder reactors; and a radiological legacy from its 210 abandoned uranium mines which continue to pollute the environment today.

□ There is no such thing as a “pro-nuclear environmentalist.” Environmentalists do not support extractive, non-sustainable industries like nuclear energy, which poisons the environment; releases cancer-causing radioactive elements; creates radioactive waste deadly for thousands of years and, if there is an accident, can render vast areas permanent sacrifice zones.

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