

News from Beyond Nuclear

For Immediate Release, July 14, 2016

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LESSONS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN LEARNED FROM PRIOR FIRE SAFETY VIOLATIONS AT ENTERGY'S WATERFORD NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN LOUISIANA COULD SHED LIGHT ON CURRENT REVELATIONS OF SIMILAR VIOLATIONS AT PALISADES

Covert, Michigan and Takoma Park, Maryland--In the past week, since WWMT/TV-3 in Kalamazoo, Michigan broke the story on July 8th that "Security workers placed on leave at [Entergy's Palisades] nuclear plant," (see <http://www.beyondnuclear.org/security/2016/7/9/beyond-nuclear-background-re-fire-security-risks-at-palisa.html>) Beyond Nuclear has assembled enough significant new information to feel the need to publish a second, updated backgrounder on the still developing scandal. (Beyond Nuclear published the first backgrounder, about the long history of fire and security risks at Palisades, on July 9th -- see it at the link provided above.)

Palisades is located on the Lake Michigan shoreline in Covert, Michigan, four miles south of South Haven.

The new supplementary backgrounder, published on Thursday, July 14th, is entitled **BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE ON NUCLEAR REGULATIONS! *Palisades: Lessons NOT Learned from Entergy's Prior Fire Safety and Security Violations.*** It includes a section entitled "REVELATIONS FROM SIMILAR PRIOR VIOLATIONS AT ENTERGY'S WATERFORD NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN LOUISIANA COULD SHED LIGHT ON CURRENT VIOLATIONS AT PALISADES." See the [PDF version](#), as well as the [Word version](#) (with live URL links to additional documentation).

Two U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) documents, dated December 2015 and April 2016, obtained by Beyond Nuclear's Reactor Oversight Project director, Paul Gunter, revealed a glaring red flag regarding fire risks at Entergy reactors, due to serious, willful violations of regulations at Entergy's Waterford nuclear power plant in Louisiana. Violations at Waterford included a fire watch contract worker who slept when he was supposed to be making rounds, then falsified the paperwork to cover his tracks. Altogether, seven fire watch contract workers at Waterford, as well as a supervisor and even a manager, were implicated in falsification of work logs for fire watch rounds, and an associated cover-up of the wrongdoing. Links to the two NRC reports are provided in the supplementary Beyond Nuclear backgrounder mentioned immediately above.

Gunter also learned from a reliable source that some 22 (twenty-two) security guards have been suspended (on paid administrative leave) from their duties at Palisades, for "fire inspection anomalies" -- most likely also having to do with allegedly having faked

fire watch rounds, but not actually having made the required rounds of plant premises. Similar violations occurred at Waterford from 2013-2014, yet the lessons were not learned to prevent recurrence at Palisades. Whether or not Palisades supervisors and managers were also involved in the violations, or their cover up -- as was the case at Waterford -- remains to be seen. The range of dates for the alleged violations at Palisades also remains undisclosed. Beyond Nuclear plans to file a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain the missing information.

"If an undetected fire were to spread to safety-significant systems, structures, or components, a reactor meltdown or high-level radioactive waste storage pool fire could result," said Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear. "This could result in a catastrophic release of hazardous radioactivity, killing and injuring countless thousands downwind out to great distances, ruining the Great Lakes drinking water supply for 40 million people downstream in two countries, and causing over \$100 billion in property damage," added Kamps, who has served as Don't Waste Michigan's board of directors member representing his native Kalamazoo chapter since 1993.

A nearly catastrophic fire engulfed the Browns Ferry, Alabama nuclear power plant (a Fukushima Daiichi twin design, General Electric Mark I Boiling Water Reactor) in 1975. For over four decades, the nuclear power industry -- including at Palisades -- has resisted implementing strengthened fire safety precautions, despite that near miss.

The suspension of 22 security guards at Palisades represents a significant fraction of the security guard force on site, which raises deep concerns about both security and fire risks at the age-degraded, financially-failing atomic reactor. In fact, this is the very reason -- the compromise of security -- that motivated the still anonymous security guard whistleblower (himself or herself on suspended administrative paid leave) to alert WWMT/TV-3 in the first place.

To compensate for the significantly decreased size of its security guard force, Entergy is reportedly pressuring the remaining security guards to sign waivers, as an end run around NRC fatigue regulation work-week limits. Thus, remaining security guards at Palisades are reportedly being forced to work 75-hour work-weeks. This raises additional safety and security concerns, including for the health and well being of the severely overworked security guards themselves, as well as for the safety and security of the at-risk public, downwind and downstream.

On the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Project on Government Oversight released a major report, focused on Entergy's abuse of security guards at its Indian Point nuclear power plant near New York City. POGO's report is posted online at: <http://www.pogo.org/our-work/reports/2002/nss-npp-20020912.html>.

"It's quite shocking and alarming that, fifteen years after 9/11, such abuses of security guards are still going on at Palisades," Kamps said.

In fact, at Palisades itself, a security guard forced to work 72-hour work-weeks, month after month, for a whole year, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, suffered a nervous breakdown on the job. She did so while heavily armed, and with access to safety-critical areas of the plant. Luckily, neither she, nor anyone else, was physically harmed. (See: "Guards at Nuclear Plants Say They Feel Swamped by a Deluge of Overtime," *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 2002; note that in 2002, Consumers Energy still owned Palisades, while Nuclear Management Company operated it. Entergy took over ownership and operations in 2007, and has suffered its own security failures there since.)

Gunter, a national watchdog on the fire safety risk issue at U.S. nuclear power plants since 1991, also learned from the reliable source that the FBI has joined the NRC's Office of Investigations (OI) at the Palisades site, which could well indicate the seriousness of the alleged, but still murky, wrongdoings.

One measure of the current, allegedly extreme level of wrongdoing at Palisades, is reflected by the number of security guards suspended: 22, as compared to "only" seven fire watch contract employees at Waterford, determined to have faked their fire watch tours.

Unfortunately, however, NRC has a very bad track record of mere slaps on the wrist for such serious violations of safety regulations. This is true at Waterford, as documented in Beyond Nuclear's new backgrounder linked above. But it is also true at Palisades, where NRC very recently rejected its own OI's conclusion (reached after a rigorous three and a half year long investigation), that regulatory violations and a cover-up -- involving the leakage of radioactive and acidic/corrosive water, from the defective Safety Injection Refueling Water Tank, into the Palisades safety-critical control room, full of vulnerable essential electrical equipment -- were willful. The scandal culminated in 82 gallons of radioactive water leaking into Lake Michigan. See Beyond Nuclear's media statement, and backgrounder, protesting NRC's letting Entergy Palisades get away with murder on this issue, posted at:

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/safety/2016/5/21/nrc-lets-entergy-get-away-with-murder-at-palisades-atomic-re.html>

"NRC cannot be allowed to yet again let Entergy off the hook for these most recently revealed serious, willful violations of fire safety and security regulations at Palisades," Kamps said. "UBS has called for Entergy to announce Palisades' permanent closure this autumn, and to retire the reactor by spring 2017 at the latest, for financial reasons. Entergy should shutdown Palisades immediately, before it melts down, due to the worsening age-related degradation risks, and its own willful violations of safety regulations," he added.

Beyond Nuclear is a national watchdog organization on the nuclear power industry. It is based in Takoma Park, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.