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## **Three Mile Island Given Go-Ahead to Dismantle Emergency Planning**

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Nuclear Regulatory Commission (“NRC”) staff are recommending that Exelon be allowed to reduce emergency planning at Three Mile Island (“TMI”). Exelon, which owns TMI Unit 1 will eliminate the 10-mile evacuation zone surrounding TMI, and discontinue siren tests and radiation monitoring. Exelon will also greatly reduce funding to local first responders.

Recently, the NRC denied a legal petition by Three Mile Island Alert (“TMI Alert”) to maintain emergency planning at current levels until highly radioactive spent fuel is removed from the island.

“There’s 1,500 metric tons of radioactive waste sitting on an island in the middle of the river. We should have a robust emergency plan in place until the nuclear garbage is removed from the island,” said Eric Epstein, Chairman of TMI Alert.

The Federal Emergency Management (“FEMA”) Agency raised concerns that the change may expose the Commonwealth to increased responsibility including financial burdens. FEMA wants the emergency plans in place until all fuel is moved into dry casks. (1)

Scott Portzline, security consultant to TMI Alert said, “The siren system to alert citizens of an emergency at TMI will be compromised. We recognize the number of accident scenarios has been reduced since the reactor is no longer operating, but the danger still remains.”

Mr. Portzline added, "There is one viable accident scenario that necessitates immediate notification to the public over all other scenarios. A large aircraft crashing into the spent fuel pool, could drain the pool within seconds and set fire to the spent nuclear fuel with thousands of gallons of aviation fuel."

Aviation fuel burns hot enough to ignite the zirconium cladding which encases the nuclear fuel pellets. Because the spent fuel pool holds six times more nuclear fuel than a reactor does, radioactive plumes could be far worse. It should be noted that the Harrisburg International Airport is only 2.5 miles from TMI.

One month after the 9-11 attacks, Al Qaeda threatened to attack TMI with an explosives laden cargo plane. Although the NRC claims to have taken hostile actions and aircraft crashes into the spent fuel, a closer look at that analysis does not account for the resulting fires from an air crash. Instead the NRC believes that there would be time for emergency responders to cool the spent fuel with fire hoses before the fuel heats up to the point of combustion.

Therefore, in the event of a large aircraft crashing into the spent fuel pool, there is not sufficient time to make decisions regarding evacuations. The radioactive plumes from the burning nuclear fuel would be virtually instantaneous.

There has never been a timely evacuation at any of the world's nuclear accidents even when there was time to assess the situation. The NRC and the licensee were reluctant to recommend an evacuation at TMI for two days.

Portzline cautioned, "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is shirking its mandate to protect the public safety. It would be a major mistake to allow the sirens to go untested or become unusable."

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1 Letter to NRC, FEMA Comments on Proposed Commission Paper Language for the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station, December 20, 2019.