

Media Release

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Rep. Lon Burnam, District 90, Ft. Worth

Chiaki Kasahara and Ivan Stout, a couple who lived in Japan, but left because of the Fukushima nuclear disaster

Robert V. Eye, Attorney, legally challenging proposed STP and Comanche Peak reactors,

Susan Dancer, South Texas Association for Responsible Energy

Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe in Texas; Lessons We Must Learn and Actions We Must Take In Light of the Fukushima Disaster

Austin, TX Concerned citizens in Texas are calling on U.S. leaders to do more to prevent a U.S. nuclear disaster. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster that began nearly a year ago, on March 11, 2011, resulted in explosions, releases of radioactive materials and complete meltdowns of three reactors. 160,000 people were evacuated. Radioactive Iodine-131 and Cesium-137 was detected around the world and large amounts of radioactive materials were released into the Pacific Ocean. Only two of Japan's 54 nuclear reactors are operating today and they are also expected to be shut down by the end of May. In light of the meltdowns, Germany now plans to shut down all 17 of its reactors and replace them with renewable energy. Post-Fukushima safety improvements have been recommended by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's task force.

"The lesson we absolutely must learn from Fukushima is that any nuclear reactor can have a meltdown. U.S. reactors are at risk from hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods, earthquakes, lack of cooling water and terrorist attacks, as well as accidents due to human error and mechanical failure," said Karen Hadden, Director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition. "We're urging Congress to halt nuclear licensing and nuclear loan guarantees, subsidies which would allow billions of taxpayer dollars to flow into dangerous new reactor projects. Old reactors get metal fatigue and accident risks increase. They should be retired, not re-licensed for another twenty years."

The group calls on Congressional leaders, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of Energy to prevent a US nuclear disaster by taking action to:

- Halt licensing of new reactors
- Halt nuclear "loan guarantees" that would use billions of taxpayer dollars for new reactors

- Halt re-licensing of aging reactors, which should be shut down on or before their original retirement date
- Plan for a transition away from nuclear power to safer, more affordable and reliable means of electric generation
- Initiate more thorough and realistic disaster scenario testing of U.S. diesel generators
- Better information through EPA regarding Fukushima radiation releases, hot spots, food supply safety and exposure risks from radioactive transport and product importation here and around the globe. Cows shipped in July 2011 from Fukushima Prefecture to Tokyo had three to six times the legal limit for radioactive cesium.
- Demand that detailed and accurate public health information be made available in Japan and in the U.S., including more radiation monitoring, and ensuring healthy food and water supplies. More evacuations may yet be needed.

“We cannot afford to have a Fukushima style disaster here in the United States. Nuclear reactors are inherently unsafe and the nuclear disaster in Japan provides additional evidence of the need to transition away from nuclear power to safer forms of electric generation,” said Ft. Worth Representative Lon Burnam. “There is still no safe way to store the waste generated by nuclear reactors and now much of the country wants to dump their radioactive waste on Texas, at a site that risks radioactive contamination of fresh water supplies for generations to come.”

The number of lives that will be lost due to cancers as a result from the Fukushima explosions and meltdowns is unknown. Eighteen years later, a Russian study found that 985,000 people had died as a result of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, mainly from various cancers.

“In order to protect ourselves and our four-year-old son from radiation exposure, we had to leave the home we loved and had spent our adult lives working towards in Japan, and now live in Texas. We only had two hours to decide what to take with us and had to leave most of our belongings behind. It broke our hearts to leave family and friends that we loved without saying goodbye, but our health was at risk,” said Chiaki Kasahara.

The nuclear industry and public officials minimized health risks, but the science is clear that exposure to radioactive contamination through the air, water or food leads to various illnesses that can take even decades to manifest.” said Chiaki's husband, Ivan Stout. “We worry about Chiaki's mother, who stayed in Japan, and the many friends we left behind, especially the young children who may be impacted by radiation exposure. However, we understand the huge financial burden of moving out of a home no one is willing to buy. No one should be forced to decide between financial ruin and the health of their family.”

The Comanche Peak and South Texas Project sites in Texas have two nuclear reactors each, but the counties in which they have operated for decades still have no paid full-time professional fire departments.

"What would happen if there were fires and explosions at the reactors here?" asked Susan Dancer, who lives eight miles from the South Texas Project reactors and is Director of the South Texas Association for Responsible Energy. "People were barely able to evacuate this area with several days notice of a recent hurricane, but there would be no advance notice for a nuclear disaster."

"The diesel generators didn't hold in Japan and would probably fail here too. U.S. diesel generators aren't tested for realistic disaster scenarios. They should started up quickly and run for two weeks or more to see if they could meet the demands of a real disaster, not simply tested for a matter of several hours."

"In the Comanche Peak, South Texas Project and other reactor cases, Information regarding nuclear reactor fire and explosion risks and the inadequate plans to address them is wrongfully being withheld from the public. Basic nuclear safety information is being labeled as classified, when in fact it is crucial information that the public not only has a right to know, but should know," said Robert V. Eye, attorney for intervenors opposing new reactors in Texas. "Congress should require that this most basic crucial safety information be made available to the public and not be kept hidden behind a veil of secrecy. The requirements put in place to protect against aircraft impacts and the Fukushima Task Force safety improvement recommendations have not been incorporated into new license applications. Issuing any new reactor license without doing so is irresponsible and likely to have consequences."

Texas events related to the anniversary of the Fukushima disaster include:

Austin – Saturday, March 10th at Noon, Prevent Fukushima Texas, to be held at the river (Lady Bird Lake) immediately across from the front of the Austin City Hall (301 W. 2nd St.) - just West of 1st Street. Speakers will include Chiaki Kasahara and Ivan Stout, who lived in Japan at the time of the nuclear disaster and had to leave their home, family and friends in order to protect their health and that of their young son. Sponsored by SEED Coalition and Nuke Free Texas. www.NukeFreeTexas.org

San Antonio – Candlelight Vigil, Saturday, March 10th at 6 pm, at the Federal Building at 727 E. Cesar Chavez Imagine a World Without Nuclear Disasters – www.EnergiaMia.org
210-667-5695

Dallas – March 11th at 3 pm at the Cancer Survivors' Plaza, 635 N. Pearl. The Nuclear Free World Committee of the Dallas Peace Center will host an observation of the Fukushima Disaster Anniversary. www.DallasPeaceCenter.org

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