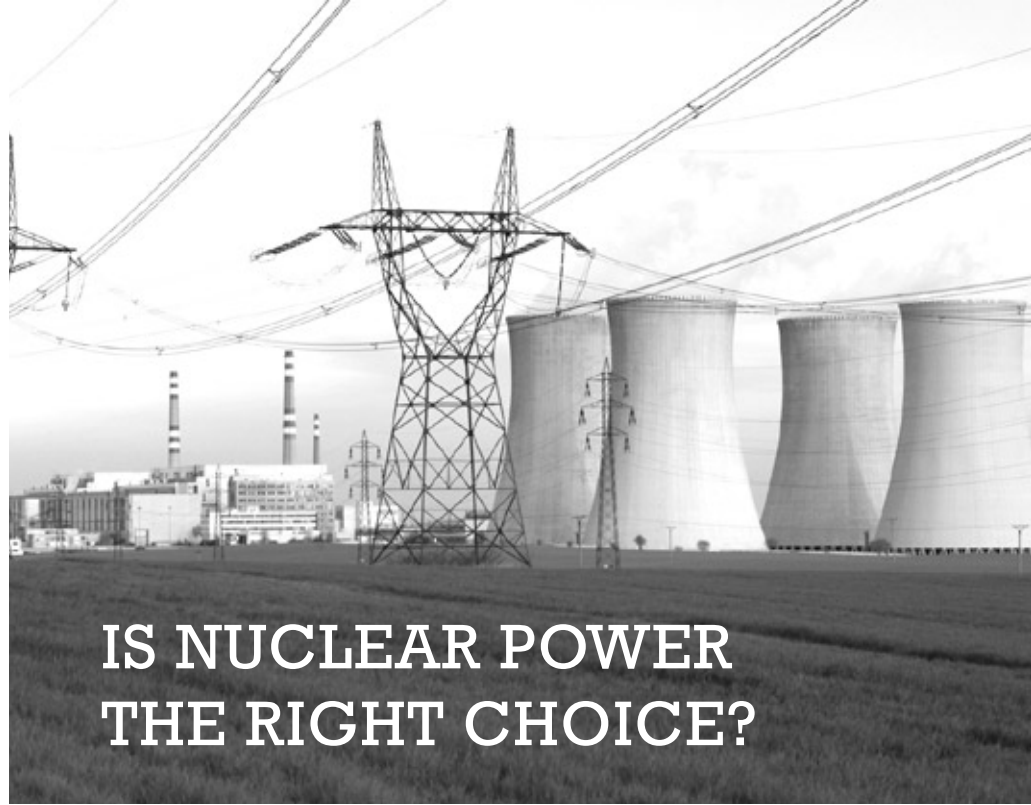




Stopping the Resurgence of Nuclear Power

The proponents of nuclear power are seizing on the global warming crisis to convince the general public and law makers to subsidize the construction of a new generation of nuclear power plants. Nuclear power plants threaten national security and pose substantial risks, as we figure out how to dispose of their radioactive waste. In 2006, Friends of the Earth organized a national conference to jump-start the anti-nuclear power movement, and Friends of the Earth Action will be dogging the candidates and office holders who fail to stand up against the latest nuclear push.

From "Friends of the Earth"
www.Action.FOE.org



IS NUCLEAR POWER THE RIGHT CHOICE?

South Carolina Electric and Gas filed an application with the SC Public Service Commission on June 2, 2008, in order to gain the permits necessary to begin land clearing, excavation and construction on a nuclear reactor power plant in Jenkinsville, SC. The cost of construction will, of course, be passed on to rate payers. Friends of the Earth has filed a request for a hearing and public notice, so that every resident and utility user can weigh-in on this monumental decision.

Natural Awakenings wants you to be involved. Long-time Grand Strand resident Ron Alexander offers his thoughts and shares some of his and friends' experiences in his letter to us:

Is Nuclear a Clean and Safe Energy Source?

When nuclear plants first appeared in the Southeast, local people saw them as an economic boon, the salaries being offered were so much higher than those at other local industries. Unfortunately, those workers were not adequately prepared or educated of the dangers associated with these plants, or of the threat of radiation poisoning or the more subtle long-term effects.

Jan, a science major at UNC, was an adventurer who loved marine science and sailing. Unable to get a lucrative job, she went back to UNC graduate school to study environmental science, specializing in water quality. Upon earning her master's degree, Jan accepted a job at a nuclear plant in North Carolina, as one of the first Radiation Safety Officers. Jan was shocked to see the carelessness of the workers at the plant, especially when transferring waste to tankers for the trip to Barnwell, South Carolina Nuclear Waste Facility. Since she was new, Jan had some difficulty in exerting any influence over the workers; they had been doing it their unsafe way for over a decade. Jan quit her job after a couple of frustrating years, and agrees that the conditions were much like those in the 1983 movie *Silkwood*. This film was based on a true story about whistleblower Karen Silkwood, who worked at a nuclear processing plant in Oklahoma. Silkwood was purposefully contaminated, psychologically tortured and mysteriously killed as she delivered evidence of the plant's unsafe practices and blatant worker safety violations to a reporter.

Andy, a welder, was making a relatively good living in North Carolina when he accepted a much higher salary to work at the same nuclear plant as did Jan.

He corroborates Jan's claims of carelessness, and says that most of his co-workers were careless even when radiated, when they would leave early, even skipping the prescribed scrubbing. "What you can't see can't hurt you," they all seemed to believe.

One of Andy's primary jobs was to check the welds and valves on the plutonium tank. A leak from this seventy foot high tank could be catastrophic, so Andy spent a lot of his time inspecting the weakest spots. The first few times he did these routine inspections, there were three security officers with shotguns pointing at him, bringing home just how vital his job was to the security of the plant. He says that the guards had been ordered to shoot him if he started to weld above the primary valve, the last one capable of stopping a leak. Andy's story typifies the constant danger of nuclear plants to our environment, as does the fact that his only child was born with Spina Bifida, a condition never seen before in his or his wife's family.

My ex-wife's father died in his mid-forties, of radiation poisoning he got while working at the Savannah River Nuclear Plant. There was no doubt about the cause of his tragic death, and each of the children living at home at the time of his demise were awarded a hefty sum of money from the federal government. They knew.

Nuclear power is a carbon-free fuel and is promoted as a "clean" alternative to fossil fuel. The truth is, the by-product of nuclear power - depleted uranium - is highly toxic, extremely difficult to transfer safely, and has a half-life of 4.5 million years. This means that wherever this waste is stored is contaminated permanently. Not only that, but just as there is a limited and diminishing supply of fossil fuel, so it is with uranium. Like oil, the price of uranium is continually escalating, making economics fade as a good reason to continue using nuclear power.

Given the facts, is nuclear power the safe and clean alternative energy source it is promoted to be?

Ron Alexander



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