

## **News from Beyond Nuclear For Immediate Release, February 27, 2012**

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### **Davis-Besse challenged again based on Kucinich revelations**

Toledo, Ohio-- The recent [U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission \(NRC\) inspection report](#), coupled with [a revelation provided by U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich \(Democrat-Ohio\)](#), have provided environmental intervenors against the Davis-Besse atomic reactor with substantial documentation to confront relicensing of the nuclear plant. The FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Company's (FENOC) proposal to extend operations at the problem-plagued Davis-Besse atomic reactor by 20 years has been challenged by a coalition which includes Beyond Nuclear, Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, Don't Waste Michigan, and the Green Party of Ohio. The coalition submitted its supplementary contention this morning to the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, which is planning an oral hearing near Davis-Besse in the weeks ahead.

[Today's coalition filing is posted at Beyond Nuclear's website.](#)

Congressman Kucinich's investigations have revealed documentation that FENOC and NRC staff have been sitting on for several weeks. That documentation confirms that the outer layer of rebar steel reinforcement in the concrete containment shield building at Davis-Besse has lost its structural effectiveness due to the extensive cracking. [Rep. Kucinich revealed the truth in a Feb. 8 media release.](#)

"If not for Congressman Kucinich's focused scrutiny of Davis-Besse, the public would not have known just how bad the cracking of the concrete shield building is," said Terry Lodge of Toledo, legal counsel for the intervenors.

NRC's recent inspection report, dated Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>, made known for the first time that FENOC had nearly used brittle, corroded rebar for its December 2011 patch job to close the breach in the shield building after swapping out large reactor vessel heads – for an unprecedented second time in a decade -- last autumn. NRC inspectors caught FENOC using an industrial oven set at too low a temperature, which introduced corrosion and brittleness into the safety-significant rebar. Luckily, NRC discovered the error before FENOC cemented the bad rebar into the containment shell.

“We contend that FENOC’s current lack of quality assurance and control, its historic and notorious lack of safety culture, as well as its severely degraded containment structure, call into question Davis-Besse’s operational safety during the proposed 20 year license extension,” Lodge added.

NRC’s inspection report also revealed that FENOC had resisted thoroughly inspecting the new reactor vessel head itself. NRC forced the inspection nonetheless, to guard against the risk of a defective reactor vessel head being installed at Davis-Besse. Although no defects were ultimately discovered, had there been any, FENOC would not have known. (FENOC is suspected of having previously installed a potentially defective vessel head replacement at its Beaver Valley nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania.)

“FENOC plans to breach containment for a fourth time in 2014, to replace its dangerously degraded steam generators,” said Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear, a national watchdog group on the nuclear power industry based in Takoma Park, Maryland. “This could worsen the concrete cracking, and begs the question whether the current steam generators are safe right now?”

A cascading failure of steam generator tubes would lead to a Loss of Coolant Accident in the reactor core. An old steam generator tube rupture at Indian Point nuclear power plant near New York City in 2000 was considered the worst “break down phase” accident at a U.S. reactor, until Davis-Besse’s Hole-in-the-Head Fiasco in 2002 surpassed it, the most infamous mishap at a U.S. atomic reactor since the Three Mile Island meltdown of 1979. Recently, new steam generators have experienced premature tube failure at Three Mile Island, Arkansas Nuclear One, and San Onofre in California.

Other revelations in the NRC inspection report included an un-licensed worker caught manipulating the control rods in the operating reactor core, in violation of safety regulations; severe deterioration of the intake/discharge canal in Lake Erie, essential for cooling the reactor during routine operations, as well as during emergency pressure and heat build ups; and a worker damaging safety-significant equipment by climbing on – and jumping down from – it, rather than using a ladder.

[A copy of the NRC inspection report is posted at the Beyond Nuclear website.](#)

FENOC continues to have one of the worst track records of any U.S. nuclear utility. Besides the [problem-plagued history at Davis-Besse](#), its Perry plant northeast of Cleveland is considered by NRC as one of the five least safe reactors in the U.S., out of 104 operating units in the country. FENOC’s Beaver Valley nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania has a litany of problems: a corroded containment; a potentially defective replacement vessel head; nuclear fuel that NRC is concerned could dangerously overheat in an emergency; and one of the worst embrittled reactor pressure vessels in the U.S., at risk of fracturing like a hot glass under cold water upon activation of the Emergency Core

Cooling System.

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Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic.