

Media Coverage of Beyond Nuclear and environmental coalition contentions filing against the Detroit Edison Fermi 3 new reactor proposal on March 9, 2009:

Southgate, MI *News-Herald*, “FRENCHTOWN TWP: Environmental groups oppose third power plant,” <http://www.thenewsherald.com/articles/2009/03/17/news/doc49bfd67b86c9d457190917.txt>

Michigan Messenger, [Fermi 3 opposition takes legal action to block new nuclear reactor](http://michiganmessenger.com/14545/fermi-3-opposition-takes-legal-action-to-block-new-nuclear-reactor), March 11, 2009, <http://michiganmessenger.com/14545/fermi-3-opposition-takes-legal-action-to-block-new-nuclear-reactor>

Windsor Star (Ontario, Canada), “Windsor group tries to stymie U.S. nuclear reactor,” March 11, 2009, <http://www.windsorstar.com/Technology/Windsor+group+tries+stymie+nuclear+reactor/1379136/story.html>

Toledo Blade, March 16, 2009

2 nuclear plants get favorable reviews Critics vow to stop plan for new Fermi

By [TOM HENRY](#)
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Although Davis-Besse and Fermi 2 fared well in their 2008 performance reviews issued earlier this month, both Toledo-area nuclear plants continue to have a hard time winning over critics.

•Davis-Besse's tarnished legacy continues to be an anecdote for the nation's top nuclear regulators, seven years after FirstEnergy Corp. nearly let its reactor head burst, causing a breach that would have allowed radioactive steam to form in the containment building that protects the nuclear reactor. The last such accident occurred in 1979 with the partial meltdown at Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island.

Two Nuclear Regulatory Commission board members last week used Davis-Besse to illustrate the need for more safety while demanding greater accountability from nuclear industry



Regulators cite a failure in 2002 at the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station as an example for the need for greater accountability.
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officials.

Members of the largest conference in NRC history - one that drew 2,700 nuclear executives and others from across the world - were directed to a model of the near-rupture that was on display in the Washington suburb of Bethesda, Md.

Five anti-nuclear groups, unimpressed by Fermi 2's solid performance last year, followed through with their request for an intervention hearing aimed at blocking plans DTE Energy might have of building Fermi 3.

The NRC is reviewing DTE's application for what would be a \$10 billion plant, although the utility has not committed itself to building it.

The Davis-Besse and Fermi complexes are along western Lake Erie, each about 30 miles from Toledo.

FirstEnergy and DTE, their respective owner-operators, were among several in the nation the NRC praised in letters this month for operating their nuclear plants "in a manner that preserved public health and safety and fully met all cornerstone objectives" in 2008.

Davis-Besse's performance was solid enough that the NRC said its scope this year will be limited to routine baseline inspections, except for a review of an annual, third-party assessment of the station's safety culture/safety conscious work environment.

That was one of the conditions the NRC set for FirstEnergy before allowing Davis-Besse to resume operation in 2004 after a record two-year outage.

The near-rupture of Davis-Besse's reactor head figured prominently into a speech NRC Commissioner Gregory B. Jaczko delivered at the agency's conference Wednesday, as well as one NRC Commissioner Peter B. Lyons had delivered the day before.

"When we think about the lessons learned from Davis-Besse, we think of incremental improvements to ensure we do a better job of inspecting and ensuring regulatory compliance. But the real lesson of Davis-Besse or even [Three Mile Island] is that we must never get complacent," Mr. Jaczko said.

Mr. Lyons closed his speech by noting the model of Davis-Besse's reactor head that the NRC had on display.

"That model reminds me of the importance of questioning, listening to, understanding, and unflinchingly exposing the truth, even when it hurts, and especially when we can learn from it - all key elements of a strong safety culture," he told attendees.

The Davis-Besse saga has factored into other annual NRC conferences, at least one of which featured results from an inspection team from Britain that studied the plant's workplace.

The NRC said on its Web site that its conferences have drawn representatives from 26 countries.

Fermi 2 had issues in human performance a year ago, but the NRC said it now considers those resolved.

"We have concluded that changes in procedures and policies, along with the emphasis through the management and supervisor levels on the use of human performance tools, has improved human performance at Fermi," according to a letter from Cynthia D. Pederson, division of reactor projects director for the agency's Midwest regional office near Chicago.

DTE's application for Fermi 3 is one of more than two dozen the NRC has under review nationally. Each review is expected to take about four years.

Five anti-nuclear groups, including activists from the Toledo area, southeastern Michigan, and southwestern Ontario, announced last week they had jointly filed a 145-page objection to DTE's Fermi 3 application, citing 14 legal concerns.

They took issue with a DTE environmental report and cited a potential for more radioactive, toxic, and thermal damages to Lake Erie's western basin, an area which scientists have described as the warmest, shallowest, and most biologically productive part of the Great Lakes.

Contact Tom Henry at:

thenry@theblade.com

or 419-724-6079.

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Groups file opposition to Fermi 3

A coalition of citizen groups is asking federal regulators to reject DTE Energy's plans to build a new Fermi 3 nuclear power plant, contending that it would pose a range of threats to public health and the environment.

The groups have filed 14 contentions with the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission, seeking to intervene in the licensing process and claiming that a new plant would pose "radioactive, toxic and thermal impacts on Lake Erie's vulnerable western basin."

DTE Energy, which already operates the Fermi 2 reactor near Newport, is considering building a Fermi 3 plant at the same site, using a new and as-yet unapproved design.

"For starters, this plant is not needed and we're prepared to demonstrate that," said Michael Keegan of Monroe, a member of Don't Waste Michigan, one of the groups opposing the project. "We have

national experts and former NRC commissioners - some of the nation's best minds - who helped compile this document.

"The proposed Fermi 3 would represent another half-century of safety and security risks for the Great Lakes shoreline," he said. "Many concerned local residents don't want to play yet another round of radioactive Russian roulette."

The groups say that the environmental impacts of the proposed plant have not been determined adequately and the government probably should determine the plant's environmental impact on a regional basis rather than just the local impact.

Other contentions are that there is no good way to dispose of the radioactive wastes and fuel the plant generates and that the design of the plant DTE is considering should have been approved before the licensing process began.

DTE filed an application for a federal license to build and operate the plant late last year. It said it has not committed to building the plant but met a deadline that would make it eligible for federal incentives if it decided to proceed.

It has been operating the present Fermi 2 nuclear plant since January, 1988.

The idea alternately has been hailed as a potential boon to the economy, a job-creator and a way to meet future energy needs and condemned as a threat to safety and the environment and an unwarranted burden on electric customers.

The environmental coalition met a federal deadline this week for filing arguments with the NRC. If the federal Atomic Safety Licensing Board (ASLB) finds the arguments have merit, the coalition would be granted intervenor status and hearings would be held on the claims.

NRC officials said Tuesday they weren't sure when the agency might begin reviewing the environmental groups' contentions regarding the Fermi 3 plant. "It takes a couple of months, usually, for the ASLB to make a decision," said Victoria Mytling, an NRC spokeswoman.

"It's a very loaded game," Mr. Keegan said. "The ASLB has a high hurdle and evidentiary evidence has to be presented up front, and we've done that. We have a multitude of experts to speak on our behalf."

The coalition includes Beyond Nuclear, Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination, Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario, Don't Waste Michigan, and the Sierra Club.

The coalition said it objected to Fermi 3's radioactive, toxic, and thermal impacts "especially considering the cumulative damage already occurring in the Great Lakes due to the presence of 33 operating atomic reactors, and dozens of additional coal fired power plants."

"Efficiency and renewable, such as solar and wind, could readily replace the dirty, dangerous and expensive Fermi 3 proposal," said Terry Lodge, the Toledo-based legal counsel to the coalition. "And they could do so much more cleanly, safely, and affordably."

"As Fermi 2's storage pool is full to the gills, and vulnerable to accident or attack, Detroit Edison proposes to generate yet more radioactive waste it doesn't know what to do with," said Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear, a national watchdog group in Takoma Park, Md. "With President Obama indicating the end of the Yucca Mountain dumpsite proposal in Nevada, forever deadly radioactive wastes generated by Fermi 2 and 3 would continue to pile up on the Lake Erie shoreline with nowhere to go," he added.

"Taxpayers and ratepayers should not be forced to further subsidize the already heavily subsidized nuclear power and coal industries," said Ed McArdle of the Sierra Club. "We believe the electricity from Fermi 3 will not even be needed."

Many of the contentions cite a lack of sufficient information on which to base a licensing decision. "These are all unanswered questions and they're not giving answers. They're just saying give us the green light," Mr. Keegan said. "This Fermi 3 plant is not going to get out of the blocks."

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DTE defends its plans for another nuclear power plant

DTE Energy officials defended their federal application, saying it would be a prudent investment in Michigan's energy future.

"As part of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) process for reviewing our license application, the commission seeks input from interested parties through the contention process, so Tuesday's filing is not unusual or unexpected," said Ron May, a DTE senior vice president. "We welcome the participation of all parties and we look forward to the NRC's review of the contentions and our responses to them.

"While Detroit Edison has not decided to build a new nuclear plant, we believe that nuclear power will be a vital element in meeting Michigan's long-term environmental, economic and energy goals," he said. "When the economy recovers, we expect demand for electricity to resume its historical upward trend. And we believe that nuclear power is the best choice for replacing older fossil-fuel plants

"It is important that energy remain affordable for families and business, and of all base-load generation, nuclear power plants have the lowest and most stable fuel costs," he said. "Because we filed our license application in time to meet the deadline to be eligible for federal production tax credits, our customers would benefit from lower bills should we decide to build the plant

"Contrary to assertions made by the groups filing contentions to our license application, both of our plants on Lake Erie - Fermi 2 and the Monroe Power Plant - operate in full compliance with all environmental, security and safety regulations," he added.

"There also is no reason to believe that the storage of spent fuel would impact Lake Erie. On-site storage of spent fuel is carefully regulated by the NRC and has proven to be safe and secure. There never has been a release of radioactive material from spent fuel storage at any U.S. power plant," he said.

Monroe Evening News

Groups petition against new nuclear plant

by [Charles Slat](#) , last modified March 10, 2009 3:38PM

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