

Unacceptable Risk:

Pipeline Construction Poses a Threat to Health and Well-Being of Region's Population

Statement of:

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Buchanan, NY – I am here to deliver a specific message regarding the construction and operation by Spectra Energy of a very large high pressure gas pipeline that is being located dangerously close to a nuclear power facility that is already known to be fragile and accident prone.

This is my message:

As a physician and a public health professional, I say, unequivocally, that risks of this pipeline, as will be explicitly described by my colleagues, far outweigh the possible benefits and pose an unacceptable level of vulnerability to the men, women and children of this entire region – and beyond.

One of the nation's oldest and most fragile nuclear plants, Indian Point, operated by Entergy, located in the nation's most densely populated region has been plagued for years with multiple problems from radiation leakage to fires.

Plans in place for evacuation of at risk populations in the event of a major accident and reactor meltdown can only be characterized as wildly inadequate, from unrealistic expectations of evacuation routes and insufficient protection of vulnerable populations to ill-considered determinations of evacuation timing.

And, most significantly, there have been essentially no plans for accommodating evacuees anywhere in the region for more than very brief periods.

The problem, of course, being that in a melt-down scenario with extensive radiation contamination, potentially millions of people would be traumatically displaced and in need of permanent relocation in communities that would be unable to provide permanent housing, schools, health care access, jobs, and more.

In addition, little analysis has been done to even begin to scratch the surface of what economic consequences would be faced by the region and the nation in the event of a melt-down with unprecedented, massive and chaotic population displacement.

It's worth noting that a substantial portion of the workforce driving the economy for New York City and other major communities in the region lives within 50 miles of the Indian Point nuclear power plants, or "energy center" as its owner has so designated the facility.

It would be the height of foolishness to discount the possibility of a reactor failure at Indian point from any number of scenarios, accidental and deliberate.

Yet, instead of shutting this unfortunately sited, high risk plant – and even instead of reducing the vulnerability and risk of the existing plant, a decision was made to build a massive, high pressure gas line in a location far too proximal to the facility.

Instead of doing what Governor Andrew Cuomo and many other political leaders and elected officials have requested in terms of a truly independent, expert review of the safety issue and risks posed by the pipeline, construction has continued and, as far as we know, that comprehensive review has not happened.

And instead of all elected officials joining the governor and imploring president Obama to compel the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to shut down the pipeline construction, nothing has happened. And the project drones on.

I understand that there is a sizeable number of people in the community whose job security is directly or indirectly related to the on-going operations of the plant and, now, the completion of the pipeline. And these people deserve to have their voices heard and their perspectives understood.

That said, there is too much at stake, too much risk to permit the construction and operation of a high pressure gas pipeline at this place, at this time - no matter what economic upside might be envisioned for Spectra and Entergy.

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