

Expand Evacuation, Emergency Plans Around Indian Point, Study Urges

20 million people live within 50 miles of the nuclear plants but only 1.7 million have a plan, Disaster Accountability Project points out.

By LANNING TALIAFERRO (Patch Staff) April 16, 2015



The Disaster Accountability Project issued a report this week that says local authorities need disaster planning that includes evacuating the 20 million people living up to 50 miles out from the nuclear power plants at Indian Point.

The Disaster Accountability Project, founded in 2007 after Hurricane Katrina, works to save lives and reduce suffering after disasters by maximizing the impact of preparedness, response and relief. To that end the nonprofit offers independent oversight of disaster management systems.

This week, DAP released 5 simultaneous reports on evacuation plans for the Turkey Point nuclear power plant in Florida, the Salem nuclear generating plant in southern New Jersey, the Surrey power station in Virginia, the Dresden Generating Station in Illinois, and the Indian Point Energy Center in Buchanan.

DAP points out at the beginning of its report on Indian Point that when the Japanese authorities evacuated nearly 150,000 people located within 19 miles of the leaking Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission recommended US citizens within 50 miles be evacuated—but later concluded that domestically, the traditional 10-mile limit was sufficient for emergency planning purposes.

Then in March 2013, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report entitled *EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: NRC Needs to Better Understand Likely Public Response to Radiological Incidents at Nuclear Power Plants*.

And DAP agreed with the GAO's findings.

Shadow evacuations from populated areas beyond the current 10-mile emergency planning zones could result from a public informed and influenced by readily-available guidance even if local authorities instruct certain members of the public that no evacuation is necessary from their location.

A search of the Internet easily turns up several recommendations and suggestions for evacuation to points more than 50 miles away from a stricken nuclear plant, including the NRC's own press release about Fukushima Dai-ichi. In addition, other credible organizations such as Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Smithsonian Institution have web sites discussing 50-mile evacuations.

So DAP spent the last year surveying current local emergency preparedness efforts and the level of information provided to the public regarding radiological emergencies within a 50-mile radius of Indian Point, which is owned by Entergy.

That would expand the planning zone from Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties—where 1.7 million live inside the 10-mile zone—to 20 jurisdictions in four states.

DAP researchers said they sent requests to those four jurisdictions asking for educational materials for the public; generic emergency plans; Indian Point emergency planning information; and evacuation time plans, including “shadow evacuation” estimates. According to the report, only Rockland County provided documents in response to all four questions asked.

- All four provided emergency planning information related to Indian Point.
- All but Putnam County provided educational materials and/or brochures as mandated by the NRC in the Code of Federal Regulations.
- Just Westchester and Rockland counties in New York provided all-hazard emergency plans.
- Only Orange and Rockland counties made concrete referrals to evacuation time estimate planning documents and shadow evacuation studies authored by an Entergy contractor and filed with the NRC.

The DAP report concludes that “Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania should not wait for the federal government to act. The states, counties, and cities within 50 miles of the Indian Point plant can and should voluntarily plan for emergencies beyond what is mandated by the federal government.”

Most of the jurisdictions that DAP sent requests to—for educational materials for the public; generic emergency plans; Indian Point emergency planning information; and evacuation time plans, including “shadow evacuation” estimates—didn’t have them.

Here’s the list:

- Westchester County NY
- Rockland County NY
- Putnam County NY
- Orange County NY
- Dutchess County NY
- Bergen County NJ
- Passaic County NJ
- Stamford CT
- Sussex County NJ
- Ulster County NY
- Danbury CT
- New York City
- Morris County NJ
- Hudson County NJ
- Nassau County NY
- CT State Emergency Management Division