

WHY WE MUST CLOSE INDIAN POINT NOW :

Worse than Fukushima

The meltdown of Japan's Fukushima Daichi nuclear plant was a wake-up call that we ignore at our peril. It could happen here, and if it did, the consequences would be much, much worse than they were in Japan.

Former NRC commissioner Victor Gilinsky wrote recently in The New York Times, "A severe accident at Indian Point...is a remote but real possibility....The Chernobyl accident was dismissed in Western countries on the grounds that it was the product of Soviet sloppiness and 'couldn't happen here.' But the Fukushima accident involved reactors built to American designs.

As the one-year anniversary of the Fukushima disaster approaches, the crisis is not over, despite recently assurances the complex has achieved "cold shutdown." Plant owner TEPCO admitted on December 13, 2011 that Fukushima has released a staggering amount of radioactivity, 26 billion becquerels, including strontium-90, into the Pacific, where radiation readings are 50 million times normal. The same day, news broke that the wall of a reactor building collapsed as the plant continues to deteriorate.

[Uehara Haruo, architect of Fukushima Daichi Reactor 3, recently admitted in an interview](#), that the "China syndrome" in which reactor fuel melts through the floor of the containment building and into the ground, has occurred, and that he considered it inevitable that the melt-through would eventually hit groundwater, causing a massive hydrovolcanic explosion.

As terrible as the Fukushima disaster is, consequences of a similar accident at Indian Point would be even worse. Indian Point's spent fuel pools contain about three times the radioactivity contained in the entire Fukushima complex. The population around Indian Point is much denser than around Fukushima, and the distance to major cities and water supplies much shorter. Radiation extended from Fukushima 140 miles to the Tokyo reservoirs, where large numbers of residents reported symptoms of radiation poisoning. Manhattan is 25 miles from Indian Point, and some of its major reservoirs are under ten miles away ...

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... Compared to Japan's evacuation procedures and actual evacuation drills, [Indian Point's pro forma evacuation plan and tabletop-only drills leave us much less prepared](#) for a major accident than the Japanese were. Our first responders and hospitals would be overwhelmed.

We lack the facilities to decontaminate more than a handful of victims of radiation exposure. A Union of Concerned Scientists study found in 2004 that in a core meltdown at Indian Point, approximately 44,000 would die within the first year, with an additional 518,000 deaths from cancer over time. Millions of citizens would have to be permanently relocated and economic losses could be in the trillions of dollars.

After the Fukushima disaster occurred, the NRC was ordered to prepare a "lessons learned" report, which largely justified the lax regulatory status quo and prompted this absurd observation from the director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation: "The big lesson learned that we're taking out of Fukushima is that you have to be prepared for the unexpected." But independent public interest groups like Physicians for Social Responsibility and Natural Resources Defense Council prepared their own reports and drew their own lessons from Fukushima: "There is no conceivable way that people could be evacuated in the case of a serious accident at the [Indian Point]," wrote PSR. "An accident at one of Indian Point's reactors on the scale of the recent catastrophe in Japan could cause a swath of land down to the George Washington Bridge to be uninhabitable for generations," wrote NRDC. "We now know that radioactive material in the melted fuel can escape to contaminate a very large area for decades or more," Gilinski wrote in the Times. "It doesn't make sense to allow such a threat to persist a half-hour's drive from our nation's largest city."

[Read Victor Gilinski's New York Times op-ed "Indian Point: The Next Fukushima?"](#)

[Download the Physicians for Social Responsibility report, "Lessons from Fukushima and Chernobyl"](#)

[Download the Natural Resources Defense Council report, "Nuclear Accident at Indian Point: Consequences and Cost"](#)

[Download the Union of Concerned Scientists study "Chernobyl on the Hudson?"](#)

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GET INVOLVED!

Contact Manna Jo Greene Clearwater Environmental Action Director, at
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volunteer opportunities for the Indian Point Campaign.