



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN  
NUCLEAR DANGERS & A SAFE,  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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## Winter 2012 Newsletter

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## An Appeal from CBG President Dan Hirsch HELP!!!

Bridge the Gap fights on behalf of the environment and the little guy against powerful corporate polluters and their governmental allies. It is a battle between deep pockets and a tin begging cup. So, we are not too proud to beg for help.

The fight for justice is always grossly imbalanced in terms of resources. But people of conscience who work hard and diligently can prevail against those forces that damage the planet and put at risk its inhabitants. They can do so only when other people of conscience help out.

So, please dig in and toss what you can into the tin begging cup. Contributions are tax-deductible, and make possible the continuation of work that has miraculously been able to be sustained for more than four decades because of support from people like you.

So, help us keep on keeping on. Send a check to our new mailing address:

**Committee to Bridge the Gap,  
P.O. Box 4, Ben Lomond, CA 95005-0004**

or visit our website and donate using Paypal.

Check our website at [www.committeetobridgethegap.org](http://www.committeetobridgethegap.org)  
It's a great way to keep abreast of breaking developments  
and CBG in the news.

### Please note our new mailing address!

**COMMITTEE TO BRIDGE THE GAP**  
PO Box 4  
Ben Lomond, CA 95005-0004  
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[www.committeetobridgethegap.org](http://www.committeetobridgethegap.org)

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# RESTART CRIPPLED SAN ONOFRE?

## Committee to Bridge the Gap Playing Key Role in Battle

by CBG President Dan Hirsch

IN JANUARY, A STEAM GENERATOR TUBE at the San Onofre Unit 3 reactor burst, releasing radioactivity and resulting in an emergency shutdown. It was subsequently revealed that hundreds of tubes in the new steam generators in both Unit 2 and 3 had been damaged, after only a year or two of operation. Both reactors have been shut down all year, but the plant operator, Southern California Edison, has requested permission from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to restart the crippled Unit 2, without repairing or replacing the defective steam generators.

Bridge the Gap has been deeply involved in the controversy all year, performing studies, briefing reporters and public officials, and pushing for an adjudicatory hearing to resolve the safety questions before a restart decision is made.

Eight and a half million people in Southern California live within fifty miles of the troubled plant. Steam generators are critical safety features, essential for cooling the reactor core and preventing a meltdown, while providing a direct pathway to the environment for release of radioactivity if they fail.

Edison installed new steam generators at a cost to the rate-payers of \$670 million. To avoid the prospect of a hearing on the safety of the new devices, Edison claimed they were making a "like for like" replacement exempt from a license amendment, despite elsewhere boasting of the numerous changes they had made in the design. That attempt at short-cut resulted in installing new steam generators that are tearing themselves up, showing tube wear in



CBG's President Dan Hirsch addresses the Rally to Shut Down San Onofre on April 29, 2012.

1-2 years that most reactors don't see in decades.

Edison admits that the defective steam generators need to be repaired or replaced, but nonetheless has proposed restarting Unit 2 without being fixed and run at 70% power for five months to see what happens. It is an experiment with much of Southern California as guinea pigs.

Adding insult to injury, trying once again to avoid an evidentiary hearing on the safety questions, Edison insists it be able to undertake this experiment without getting a license amendment. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has recently established an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board to rule on whether a license amendment and adjudicatory hearing opportunity are required. CBG is playing a key role.

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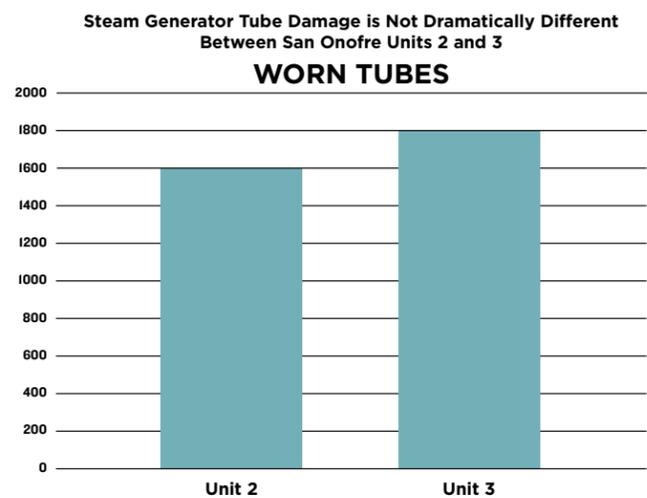
# CBG REPORT SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS

Senator **BARBARA BOXER**, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, gavelled to order a hearing on nuclear safety on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Her witnesses: all five Commissioners of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Chairperson Boxer waved in her hand what she called “a very important report by the Committee to Bridge the Gap” on the problems at the San Onofre reactor, placed it into the record of the hearing, and asked each Commissioner to commit to reviewing it and meeting with Committee staff to address its findings. They each agreed.

The operator of the troubled San Onofre nuclear plant has requested permission to restart Unit 2 without fixing the steam generators. In so doing it has asserted that Unit 2 has virtually no damage compared to Unit 3, despite having the same design and fundamental design defects, and what wear has occurred in Unit 2 is “normal settling-in wear” generally found in new steam generators. We examined those claims and found them false.

**First of all, we disclosed that Unit 2 is almost as badly damaged as Unit 3: about 1600 damaged tubes in Unit 2 and 1800 in Unit 3.**

Secondly, there are more than a thousand times as many indications of wear on those steam generator tubes in San Onofre Unit 2 than are found in the typical new steam generator. There are four hundred times more defective tubes than the median nationally. And Unit 2 has had to plug (take out of



service) 510 tubes, whereas Unit 3's fever is slightly higher, *The data tables posted by NRC show similar numbers of damaged tubes in the two units. Unit 2 has 1,595 tubes with wear, Unit 3 has 1,806.*

the typical figure nationally is ZERO. San Onofre has had to plug more tubes than the rest of the reactors in the country combined in a comparable period.

Our conclusion: “San Onofre Unit 2 and Unit 3 are both very ill nuclear plants.

but both are in serious trouble. What they are experiencing is not just normal wear due to “settling in” purportedly experienced with similar replacement steam generators. They are far, far outside the norm of national experience. And Unit 2 can-

not be said to be acceptable for restart, any more than Unit 3. Unit 2 has hundreds of times more bad tubes and a thousand times more indications of wear on those tubes than the typical reactor in the country with a new steam generator, and nearly five times as many plugged tubes as the rest of the replacement steam generators, over a comparable operating period, in the country combined. Restarting either San Onofre reactor with crippled steam generators that have not been repaired or replaced would be a questionable undertaking at best.”

The full report ‘**FAR OUTSIDE THE NORM: The San Onofre Nuclear Plant’s Steam Generator Problems in the Context of the National Experience with Replacement Steam Generators**’ by Daniel Hirsch and Dorah Shuey, with a Foreword by Dale Bridenbaugh, is available on our website at [www.committeetobridgethegap.org](http://www.committeetobridgethegap.org)



## IN MEMORIAM

Alex Karras, husband of our Board Chair, Susan Clark, and long time supporter and friend of Committee to Bridge the Gap passed away in October. It was a joy and privilege to know Alex and we offer our deepest sympathies to Susan and his family. Although well known as a football player and actor, Alex was also an ardent supporter of environmental causes. He cared deeply about people and the planet. He was a humble, quiet man, who was sharp as a tack and possessed of a crackling wit. We will miss his authenticity, humor and huge heart.

## SHUT DOWN - CONTINUED

San Onofre has had a troubled history. For the last several years it has led the nation in the number of safety complaints to the NRC by plant workers. NRC had to issue a “chilling effects” letter to Edison, saying it had created a climate in which workers were frightened of retaliation if they brought complaints forward to management. For four years, backup diesel generators, essential for providing power to keep cooling the fuel in case of loss of offsite power, had not had their batteries properly connected. Recently it was discovered that San Onofre had operated for thirty years with vibration sensors on the backup diesel generators designed to shut down the

# 8.5 million people live within 50 miles of troubled San Onofre

diesels in case of vibration, with no one having analyzed whether an earthquake would thus shut down the diesels at precisely the moment most needed. (It was failure of the backup diesels at Fukushima when they lost regular power that led to the meltdowns there.)

Bridge the Gap was featured in a CBS-LA TV news investigation about fire risks at San Onofre. After a devastating fire in the 1970s at the Browns

Ferry reactor, NRC ordered all U.S. reactors to replace faulty wiring and separate systems so a fire couldn’t take out both the primary and backup safety features. Edison dragged its feet – **for three decades**. It kept asking for extensions, saying it would “temporarily” put in place “compensatory measures”—hourly fire watches. But then it was revealed that for *five years* a person responsible for hourly fire watches had not

done them; instead the log had been fabricated to indicate the watches had been done. For five years this went on, without Edison catching it. When finally discovered, the NRC’s response was to not fine Edison, but merely allow it to conduct a couple of “sensitivity training” sessions to urge workers to follow rules! A fire at a nuclear plant can result in loss of control and cooling of the reactor and a meltdown affecting millions of people.

The decision whether to allow restart of this troubled nuclear plant with crippled steam generators is a critical one, and we will remain deeply involved in efforts to ensure that safety be the fundamental consideration.

# SANTA SUSANA MELTDOWN CLEANUP MELTS DOWN

IN 1959, A REACTOR IN THE HILLS ABOVE SIMI VALLEY and the western San Fernando Valley suffered a partial meltdown. Radioactive gases were intentionally vented into the atmosphere for weeks. The accident was kept secret for twenty years, until Bridge the Gap released a cache of documents about it.

Ever since then we have tried to help the nearby community. We were part of successful intervention in the relicensing, resulting in a shutdown of all nuclear activity at the site, believed to be the first time a community succeeded in closing an unsafe Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear facility. We helped arranged for an independent epidemiological study of the workers by a team from the UCLA School of Public Health, which found those most exposed had significantly higher death rates from cancers of the lung, lymph, and blood systems than less exposed workers at the facility.

The toughest task has been to try to get the contaminated site cleaned up. Finally, landmark legislation passed requiring cleanup to the most protective standards. And then, in the last days of the Schwarzenegger administration, the DOE and NASA (which owns part of the property that it polluted with thousands of rocket tests) entered into cleanup agreements with the state to clean their parts of the property to background—any contamination detected would be remediated.

Years of work with marvelous, dedicated people in the affected community had paid off – or so it was thought.

But polluters have deep pockets and questionable ethics. The Boeing Company, which owns much of the land and is a Responsible Party for the contamination, has resisted full cleanup

with all of its considerable resources. It went to court to block the state cleanup law. It has tried to blow up the cleanup agreements entered into by DOE and NASA. It hired a PR firm to “greenwash” Boeing’s record and divert attention from the contamination.

Most critically, it hired several well-connected polluter’s lobbyists with strong ties to the new Governor, Jerry Brown. All have deep connections within the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). And so, all of a sudden, DTSC began to function, not as a controller of toxic materials, but as a defender of polluters. It appeared that the new DTSC leadership was, as a community letter put it, “a wholly owned subsidiary of Boeing.”

DTSC has shut down a 20-year-old Inter-Agency Work Group (on which we served), blocking the only mechanism whereby the public, press, and elected officials can get updated about cleanup developments and hold the agencies’ feet to the fire. Boeing has long wanted the Work Group shut down. Indeed, since its suspension, all sorts of reversals of the cleanup commitments have occurred, in secret, because there is no longer a mechanism of transparency and accountability.

DTSC has also removed the cleanup project director, long a goal of Boeing, eliminating the last person involved in negotiating and pushing for the cleanup agreements. DTSC allowed Boeing to hire the contractor to perform the state’s Environmental Impact Report. That contractor has already recommended that the EIR breach the cleanup agreement. Most importantly, DTSC has now broken the cleanup agreements in numerous ways, making questionable whether there will ever be anything like the cleanup that was promised.

Powerful polluters profit; their victims suffer. Government, which is supposed to protect the little guy, often is just a pawn of the big forces with their lobbyists, PR firms, and campaign contributions. For now, the final outcome of this decades long battle, once thought won, remains uncertain.