



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

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Winter 2013 Newsletter

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SSFL CLEANUP FIGHT CONTINUES

A THIRD OF A CENTURY AGO, CBG HELPED BRING TO PUBLIC attention a partial nuclear meltdown that occurred at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory in the LA area. We continue to fight for full cleanup.

In 2010 the Department of Energy and NASA signed agreements with the Dept. of Toxic Substances Control to clean up all contamination to background—essentially returning the site to its condition before they polluted it. It was a remarkable victory. Boeing refused to sign a similar agreement for its part of the property, but DTSC insisted on full Boeing cleanup as well, based on longstanding state and federal law.

Shortly thereafter, however, Jerry Brown was sworn in as Governor and Debbie Raphael appointed DTSC Director. Suddenly, Boeing's lobbyists, several of whom had worked for Brown when he was Governor before, seemed to be running DTSC, getting it to reverse many of the cleanup commitments.

A series of media revelations about DTSC scandals, including its handling of SSFL, have helped expose the extent to which the department now seems to be coddling polluters and placing at risk the affected public. The fight continues.

Join CBG's Urgent Action Email List

From time to time we need your help to send urgent action emails to ensure that our voices are heard - on San Onofre, SSFL, Diablo Canyon and more.

Please sign on to our urgent action list and help increase our impact by sending your name and email address to contact.cbg@gmail.com. **THANK YOU!**

Please note our new mailing address!

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 Printed and mailed in a 100% solar powered facility using 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper created with wind power.

by *CBG President*
Dan Hirsch

IN AN EXTRAORDINARY CUL-
mination to a very long fight, the
operators of the San Onofre nuclear
reactors threw in the towel in June and
announced that that the plant is being
permanently shut down. Bridge the
Gap played a key role.

Located in one of the most popu-
lated areas of the country, between
Los Angeles and San Diego, with eight
million people living within fifty miles,
San Onofre had been offline since early
2012 when a steam generator tube in
one of the reactors ruptured, releas-
ing radioactivity into the atmosphere
and triggering an emergency shutdown. Soon it was revealed that
many other tubes in the year-old steam generators were experienc-
ing extremely rapid wear, and that new steam generators in the
other reactor were also prematurely failing.

Steam generators are an absolutely critical safety component
of reactors. They are essential for extracting heat from the reac-
tor core and preventing a meltdown. And they provide a direct
pathway to the environment, bypassing the containment, so that
any radiation release in an accident can end up spewed into the
atmosphere. Failing steam generators could thus be a very serious
risk to Southern California, since each reactor core contains one

SAN ONOFRE R.I.P.



San Onofre reactors

thousand times the long-lived radioac-
tivity of the Hiroshima bomb.

Southern California Edison, the
operator of the plant, and the U.S.
Nuclear Regulatory Commission, its
nominal regulator, were less than
candid with the public about the
extent of the damage. They resisted
for months, for example, disclosing
how many steam generator tubes in
Unit 2 and Unit 3 were damaged. They
claimed that the problems were gener-
ally restricted to Unit 3 and Unit 2
was fine, "good to go" in terms of being
restarted. But they wouldn't release the
data about Unit 2's actual condition.

Bridge the Gap, with Senator
Boxer's assistance, finally succeeded in
extracting from Edison and the NRC the actual data, analyzed
them and released them to the press. The numbers were shock-
ing—there were 1,806 damaged tubes in Unit 3, an extraordinary
amount. But there were nearly as many in Unit 2—1,595. Both
reactors were very ill; Unit 3 had a slightly higher fever than Unit
2; but both needed to be in intensive care. Starting up either with-
out repairing or replacing the damaged steam generators would be
irresponsible. But that was precisely what Edison proposed to do.

After we demolished the claim that Unit 2 was fine compared
to Unit 3 and ready to be re-started, Edison made a new claim that
this level of damage in new steam genera-

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CBG FIGHTS EFFORTS TO WEAKEN RADIATION PROTECTIONS

The Fukushima tragedy has shown once again the destructive power of nuclear accidents and the need for effective protective actions to be taken to reduce exposure to radiation. The nuclear industry and U.S. regulators, however, appear to be learning the wrong lessons.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently issued new Protective Action Guides (PAGs) for dealing with radioactive releases. The PAGs are remarkable. They basically say that a radiation release could be so immense that protecting the public in any meaningful fashion would be impossible and the public should just get used to the “new normal” of living with greatly elevated radiation exposures, far above what has ever been considered acceptable before.

The PAGs, for example, suggest allowing (indeed, forcing) the public to drink water with radioactive contamination vastly higher than EPA’s Safe Drinking Water Act limits. An analysis by Bridge the Gap of the proposed alternative drinking water limits show that they are as much as 27,000 times higher than what EPA currently deems safe! It is hard to conceive what ethical planet those who pushed for such weakened protections live on.



Fukushima smoldering after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Photo: Digital Globe

Similarly, the PAGs suggest walking away from long-term cleanup obligations after a radiation release and allowing (indeed, forcing) the public to be exposed to contaminated soil vastly higher than allowed under EPA’s longstanding cleanup requirements for the nation’s most contaminated sites. Bridge the Gap’s analysis showed that some of the alternative cleanup figures would leave behind hundreds of thousands of times as much of key radionuclides as the EPA’s preliminary remediation goals for Superfund sites, with an estimated risk by EPA of causing a cancer in every few people exposed. This is completely unacceptable.

A hundred organizations signed on to a letter written by Bridge the Gap to EPA analyzing the PAGs and demanding they be withdrawn. It can be read at our website.

www.committeetobridgethegap.org

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS



CINDI GORTNER holds a BA in Economics from UC Berkeley and a MBA from UCLA. At Nestlé she managed Nestlé Crunch and created a brand called Flipz. In addition to CBG, she serves on three boards: Haiti Healthcare Partners, Janada Bachelor Foundation for Children, and Boys Team Charity. Cindi has worked with Bridge the Gap on SSFL since 2009.



ANTHONY ZEPEDA has worked with Committee to Bridge the Gap since 2004. He became involved with CBG after attending community meetings regarding the cleanup of the highly contaminated Santa Susana Field Laboratory facility in Southern California. CBG’s invaluable Webmaster since 2006, Anthony became a board member this year. He resides in the western San Fernando Valley, where he works as an attorney representing public entities.

...[Edison] would have a difficult time withstanding that scrutiny, Edison pulled the plug. San Onofre will never operate again.

R.I.P.- CONTINUED

tors was in fact normal, just a standard “settling in” phenomenon seen throughout the country. When pressed for data to support that claim, Edison could provide none. So, we proceeded to review the “in service inspection” reports for all new steam generators nationally. What did we find? Rather than being normal, the number of damaged tubes at San Onofre was four hundred times higher than the national norm for new steam generators.

In February, CBG’s Dan Hirsch was invited by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory

Commission to present our findings before the Commissioners in Washington. In a dramatic hearing, Hirsch was outnumbered about ten to one by witnesses from Edison and its allied institutions. But the facts kept damaging the case for San Onofre restart.

Working closely with Friends of the Earth, NRDC, and other groups, CBG played an important role in pushing for an adjudicatory hearing before a restart decision would be made. In May, an extraordinary decision was issued by the NRC’s Atomic Safety and Licensing Board. It ruled that indeed a

license amendment, and thus an adjudicatory hearing, was required. Recognizing that its proposal to restart San Onofre without fixing or replacing the damaged steam generators would have a difficult time withstanding that scrutiny, Edison pulled the plug. San Onofre will never operate again.

Thirty years ago, the NRC estimated an accident at San Onofre could result in as many as 130,000 immediate radiation deaths, 300,000 latent cancers, and 600,000 genetic effects—more than a million casualties. The people of Southern California are now much safer.

DIABLO CANYON NEXT

With the closure of San Onofre, there remains only one operating nuclear plant in California, the Diablo Canyon reactors near San Luis Obispo. It was built initially to withstand only a relatively small earthquake fault. After construction was nearly complete, the huge Hosgri Fault was discovered nearby. Bungled upgrades left Diablo vulnerable to being destroyed by a major earthquake on the Hosgri. Now a new fault has been discovered, the Shoreline, and NRC says the Shoreline Fault likely results in the plant not being able to meet its earthquake design requirements.

CBG now turns its attention to Diablo Canyon. Perhaps California will soon become nuclear free.

SUIT FILED TO BLOCK ILLEGAL DISPOSAL OF PLUTONIUM WASTE

ONE OF THE MOST ELEMENTARY RULES OF NUCLEAR safety is that radioactive waste must be disposed of in waste disposal sites licensed and designed for radioactive waste. Nonetheless, Bridge the Gap recently disclosed that the Boeing Company, with approval by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), has been tearing down buildings and other structures at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL). This radioactive debris is then shipped to metal recyclers, where it has been melted down into the consumer metal supply, and to regular municipal garbage dumps and other disposal sites not permitted to take radioactive wastes.

Boeing was on the verge of tearing down and shipping out

the contaminated debris from five radiological structures at SSFL, including its PLUTONIUM FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY. Plutonium is one of the most toxic materials on earth. A few millionths of an ounce if inhaled will cause lung cancer with virtually 100% statistical certainty. Yet Boeing wants to ship debris from that building, and several other nuclear buildings, to the Buttonwillow dump in California’s Central Valley, a low-income community already disproportionately impacted. CBG helped win a major environmental justice fight at Buttonwillow a decade ago, resulting in a settlement barring any radioactive waste going there in the future. Boeing is trying to now breach that restriction.

Bridge the Gap issued a major report by Dan Hirsch and CBG research assistant Ethan Miska revealing this scandal. Our study showed that by Boeing’s own measurements, the debris was radioactive, yet hundreds of tons were sent for recycling or to sites not licensed for radioactive waste. The study led to a lawsuit filed by the Strumwasser & Woocher law firm on behalf of Consumer Watchdog, Bridge the Gap, Physicians for Social Responsibility-LA, and the Southern California Federation of Scientists. The suit attempts to enjoin the shipment of any further radioactive debris to unlicensed sites. CBG is fighting hard to make sure that radioactive waste goes where it is supposed to.