

Nuclear Shorts

11,000 Scientists Warn of Climate Emergency

The world's people face "untold suffering due to the climate crisis" unless there are major transformations to global society, according to a stark warning endorsed by 11,000 scientists from 153 nations. The alarm was published in the journal *BioScience* on the 40th anniversary of the first world climate conference, which was held in Geneva in 1979. The urgently needed changes include ending population growth, leaving fossil fuels in the ground, halting forest destruction, and slashing meat eating. The authors set out a series of urgently needed actions:

- Use energy far more efficiently and apply strong carbon taxes to cut fossil fuel use.
- Stabilize global population—currently growing by 200,000 people a day—using ethical approaches such as longer education for girls.
- End the destruction of nature and restore forests and mangroves to absorb CO₂.
- Eat mostly plants and less meat, and reduce food waste.
- Shift economic goals away from GDP growth.

Responding to a separate assessment called the Emissions Gap Report, UN Secretary General António Guterres said, "There has never been a more important time to listen to the science. Failure to heed these warnings and take drastic action to reverse emissions means we will continue to witness deadly and catastrophic heat waves, storms and pollution." —Somini Sengupta, *New York Times*, Nov. 26; and Damian Carrington, *The Guardian*, Nov. 5, 2019

House Committee Okays Changes to High-Level Waste Dump Law

The US House Energy & Commerce Committee passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2019—H.R. 2699—by a voice vote Nov. 20. This dangerously bad high-level radioactive waste bill is among the most controversial in Congress. H.R. 2699 would allow for the opening of one or more waste dumps in the US Southwest—so-called Consolidated Interim Storage Facilities (CISFs)—now targeted for New Mexico and Texas (by Holtec International/Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance at New Mexico, and by Interim Storage Partners/Waste Control Specialists in Texas). The bill also reopens plans for permanent abandonment of the waste in Yucca Mountain, Nevada—on Western Shoshone Indian land—a scientifically unsuitable site that was eliminated in 2010. If any of these dumps opens, large-scale shipments of high-risk irradiated waste reactor fuel would travel by road, rail, and/or waterway through most states, past millions of homes. The bill now moves closer to a House floor vote. **What can you do?** Please contact your US Rep's via the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and urge them to oppose H.R. 2699, and to oppose funding for both the Yucca dump and any CISF. Urge them to instead support good bills like the Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act (S. 649/H.R. 1544), and the STRANDED Act (S. 1985). —Kevin Kamps, Beyond Nuclear

Emergency Chief: Keep Evacuation Zone

In Massachusetts, the chief of emergency management is objecting to a federal plan to allow owners of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station to cut the current 10-mile radius emergency evacuation zone down to the site's property line. Samantha Phillips, director of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, says the "all hazards plan" the state uses for other emergencies would not provide an adequate response for a radiation release. The reactor, near Plymouth on Cape Cod Bay, closed last May 31st. Phillips said the licensed emergency planning for the zone around the reactor should remain in place until all 3,000 waste uranium fuel rod assemblies—now being cooled in a deep pool on site—are transferred to heavy steel and cement dry casks. "The [State's] overriding interest at Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station is to maintain public safety," Phillips says in her letter to Scott Wall, manager of the Division of Operating Reactor Licensing, a branch of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "While the type and probability of public safety risks at a nuclear power station evolve and reflect whether a plant is active or inactive, a nuclear power station undergoing decommissioning and deconstruction nonetheless presents substantial and complex risks to public safety, especially when spent fuel remains in the spent fuel pool." In the United States, 23 closed nuclear reactors are being decommissioned and thousands of tons of highly radioactive waste

fuel remain on site in cooling pools or dry cask storage. —Excerpted from an article by Christine Legere, *Cape Cod Times*, Nov. 25, 2019

NRC: "More Than Minor" Radiation Harmless

During a two-day-long cross-country road trip, two shipping containers on a flatbed truck were radioactively contaminated on the outside, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) said in a Nov. 22 violation notice sent to Westinghouse Corp., noting "the violation was more than minor." According to the *Tri-City Herald* in Kennewick, Wash., "Radioactive contamination on the outside of the containers exceeded that allowed by the US Department of Transportation, the NRC said." The cylinders started from Westinghouse's uranium fuel production factory in Columbia, South Carolina, and the contamination on the tanks was noticed when they arrived at Framatome Inc. in Richland, Washington, according to the NRC. The violation notice said the cylinders contained "residue from uranium hexafluoride" (UF₆), a toxic, radioactive material used in reactor fuel production. "The contaminated cylinders, shipped on a flatbed trailer that took two days to reach Washington, didn't endanger the public, the NRC says," the *Herald* reported. But the NRC's "all clear" raised questions about possible exposure experienced by the truck drivers, and ignores the potential exposure of passengers or pedestrians near the flatbed at red lights, in traffic jams, at filling stations, or in parking lots stopped at along the way by the flatbed. UF₆ reacts with water or water vapor and forms deadly hydrogen fluoride and a uranium-fluoride. Consequently, leaking or spilled UF₆ on the cylinder could have reacted with moisture in the air causing additional exposure hazards. —Savannah River Site Watch; and *Tri-City Herald*, Nov. 29, 2019, *the State* (Columbia, SC), Oct. 22, 2018

Dr. Janette Sherman, 1930 - 2019

The renowned professor of oncology and medicine Janette Sherman died Nov. 7 at 89 in Alexandria, Virginia. She had a combination of dementia and Addison's disease, her daughter Connie Bigelow said. A chemist by training, Dr. Sherman took up toxicology and helped pinpoint how hazardous substances, toxic chemicals and nuclear radiation could lead to cancer, birth defects and other diseases. She also studied the continuing health effects of the world's worst radiation disasters, in 1986 at Chernobyl in Ukraine and in 2011 at the Fukushima-Daiichi site in Japan. Dr. Sherman edited "*Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and*



From left, Kathy Boylan, Sr. Ardeth Platte, Sr. Carol Gilbert, and Susan Crane walked on to Büchel Air Base, in Germany, during a July 2017 action.

the Environment" (Boston: New York Academy of Sciences, 2007), which analyzed thousands of articles in the scientific literature and concluded that the Chernobyl disaster had caused an estimated 985,000 premature deaths.... Dr. Sherman studied the effects of radiation early in her career and later worked with Joseph Mangano, executive director of the nonprofit Radiation and Public Health Project. By analyzing the baby teeth of children who lived near nuclear reactors, they suggested in five peer-reviewed journal articles that even small doses of radiation had caused increases in childhood cancer. [Mr. Mangano emailed on Dec. 1, "Janette was an eminent toxicologist, but focused her energies on nuclear power plant emissions and their health consequences since the mid-1990s. ... We all can learn from her example."] —Excerpted from Katharine Q. Seelye, *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 2019.

Citizens Confront Illegal Nuclear Weapons Plant

Environmental groups won a startling victory in federal court in Knoxville, Tenn. last September, when Chief Judge Pamela Reeves sided with them in a 104-page ruling, and halted the construction of a new nuclear weapons complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Judge Reeves's order requires the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to prepare a new risk analysis that takes into consideration recent data from the US Geological Survey showing earthquake risks to old buildings at the site are far greater than earlier estimated. However, the weapons producing NNSA disregarded the court's order forcing the plaintiffs to return to court Nov. 12. Calling the NNSA's violation of the court's September ruling "brazen" and an "abuse of the judicial process," the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA), Nuclear Watch New Mexico, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, along with four individual plaintiffs, filed a rebuttal of the NNSA's argument that construction of the new H-bomb parts facility should be allowed to continue "in the interim." "It comes down to this," said Ralph Hutchison, the coordinator of OREPA, "The law is the law. The judge found them in violation of the law and ordered them to redo a significant piece of their environmental analysis—and the law is clear that this environmental analysis has to be done before they can make an irrevocable commitment of tax dollars." —OREPA, Nuclear Watch NM, and NRDC Press Release, Nov. 12, 2019

8th Worker Exposure This Year Halts Work at Hanford

The ongoing attempt to clean up vast amounts of nuclear weapons production waste at the Hanford Reservation in Washington State was put on hold again following the 8th case of worker exposure this year. Work was stopped Nov. 14 when contamination was found on an employee's skin and clothing as he was leaving the "324 building" area, one of the most contaminated sites on the 570 square mile compound. "DOE officials have said the contamination beneath the building is so radioactive that it would be fatal within a few minutes of human contact," the *Tri-City Herald* reported. According to Ty Blackford, president of CH2M Hill Plateau Remediation Co., at Hanford, "The employee was easily decontaminated using standard techniques," the *Herald* reported. The 324 building is a mere 300 yards from the Columbia River, a drinking water source for hundreds of thousands of people. The 324 building "sits over a leak of radioactive cesium and strontium into the soil beneath it," the *Herald* reported, and the AP said that the Energy Department intends to push on with demolition of the structure. —*Tri-City Herald*, Associated Press, and KNDO TV, Nov. 20, 2019

Resources for More Information

- * **Beyond Nuclear**, 6930 Carroll Avenue, # 400, Takoma Park, MD, 20912; Email: info@beyondnuclear.org; Web: beyondnuclear.org; (301) 270-2209
- * **The Treaty Compliance Campaign**, Email: info@nuclearban.us; Web: www.nuclearban.us
- * **Natural Resources Defense Council**, 40 West 20th Street, 11th floor, New York, NY 10011; (212) 727-2700; Web: nrdc.org; Email: nrdcinfo@nrdc.org
- * **Nuclear Information & Resource Service**, 6930 Carroll Avenue, # 340, Takoma Park, MD, 20912; (301) 270-6477; Email: nirsnet@nirs.org; Web: nirs.org
- * **Norwegian People's Aid**, Email: npaid@npaid.org; Web: webmaster@npaid.org
- * **Nuclear Watch New Mexico**, 903 W Alameda St., #325, Santa Fe, NM 87501; (505) 989-7342; Email: info@nukewatch.org; Web: nukewatch.org
- * **Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA)**, PO Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831; (865) 776-5050; Email: orepa@earthlink.net; Web: orepa.org
- * **Radiation and Public Health Project**, PO Box 1260; Ocean City, NJ 08226; Email: odiejoe@aol.com; Web: radiation.org
- * **Radiation Monitoring Project**, Email: radmonitoring-project@gmail.com, and neis@neis.org; Web: <http://www.dinenonukes.org/radiation-monitoring-project>; and <https://neis.org/programs-alt/radiation-monitoring-project>
- * **Savannah River Site Watch**, 1112 Florence St., Columbia, SC 29201, (803) 834-3084; Web: srswatch.org; Email: srswatch@gmail.com
- * **World Beyond War**, 513 E Main St., #1484, Charlottesville, VA 22902; Web: worldbeyondwar.org