DP Dana Point SOAPBOX
VIEWS, OPINIONS AND INSIGHTS

GUEST OPINION:
by Richard Warnock

Alleviating Fears from Misinformation About SONGS

The Dec. 6 surf column titled "How Safe Is the Water at SanO?" caused me to listen to Dr. Ian Fairlie's lecture to the Surfrider Foundation.

Dr. Fairlie comes across as a pleasant old English grandfather offering some information and guidance to his grandchildren. His presentation is a mix of misinformation, disinformation, and scary postulations.

San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) produced radioactive material over the operating lives of the three reactors. All reactors are closed.

Unit 1 spent fuel remains in an NRC-licensed, on-site dry cask storage system. No radioactive material is released.

Units 2 and 3 were shut down in 2013. Fuel is secured in an on-site, NRC-licensed storage system. No radioactive material is released.

Most Unit 2 and 3 plant structures are still present. Radioactive material is contained within systems designed to control where, how and whether any can reach public spaces. The plant has and uses decontamination systems and facilities to remove and control radioactive material.

Radioactively contaminated water is routed to storage tanks and processed using filters and ion-exchange systems to remove nearly all radioactivity. Gamma spectrometric and tritium analyses are performed on each liquid waste batch prior to release via an undersea discharge tunnel.

Liquid waste is diluted within the tunnel and enters the ocean 50 feet below the surface and about one mile offshore, where it is further diluted. Liquid releases are made in accordance with state and NRC regulations.



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An admitted lack of knowledge of the plant, facilities and processes enabled Dr. Fairlie to speculate about the horrors that might be happening to our air, beach, ocean and citizens. He could have reviewed thousands of publicly available environmental sample results collected over 55 years. He didn't.

Monthly ocean water sample analyses show naturally present potassium-40 and occasionally tritium. Tritium is naturally present, is left over from atmospheric weapons testing, and is produced by an operating reactor. It is occasionally released by SONGS to the ocean in accordance with NRC regulations.

Shoreline sediment samples are collected at three indicator locations and a control location near Newport Beach. Gamma spectrometric analyses show no San Onofre-related radionuclides in the sediment. Radionuclides related to atmospheric weapons testing have been detected.

Continuous air samples are collected weekly and analyzed for Iodine-131. There is none.

Local crops and crops from a control location (Oceanside) are sampled twice per year. Gamma spectrometric analysis shows no SONGS-related radioactivity.

A desalinization water treatment plant that converts seawater to potable water does nothing to concentrate whatever insignificant level of tritium is present. The idea that removing dissolved solids from seawater makes the water harmful to drink is contrary to worldwide practices and is patently absurd.

Dr. Fairlie is concerned about tritium dose calculations. Two scientific societies (CERRIE & ICRP) disagree about calculating dose from internally deposited tritium. This is for the two international scientific organizations to work out. It does not affect persons working at or living near San Onofre.

Dr. Fairlie's recommendations included: surf elsewhere; move women at least 3 miles away if pregnant, lactating or of child-bearing age; have no children under 18 years of age living within 3 miles of San Onofre; and don't eat vegetables, mushrooms, wild berries or honey from hives within 3 miles of San Onofre. These are irrational recommendations based on abysmal ignorance or unfounded fright.

So, as a Samuel Lawrence Foundation member, how does it feel to have spent your funds to hear Dr. Fairlie's San Onofre fairy tales?

Richard Warnock, a board-certified health physicist, has a B.S. and M.S. in Chemistry. For seven years, he worked in aerospace Research and Development, and 32 years in nuclear power. **DP**

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