

Closing Washington's Only Nuclear Plant – the Columbia Generating Station

It is time to shut down the Northwest's Fukushima-style reactor on the banks of the Columbia River.

Dirty, dangerous, and expensive – the Columbia Generating Station has been silently running on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation for the last thirty years. Energy Northwest, a consortium of 28 Washington public utilities, plans to run this plant for 20 years beyond its design life.

This is an irresponsible risk to the people, the environment, and the economy of the Pacific Northwest. Rather than courting disaster in return for less than 4% of the region's electricity, the CGS nuclear plant should be shut as rapidly as possible and its highly radioactive wastes stabilized.

Why Shut the CGS Nuclear Plant Now?

1. ***The CGS nuclear plant is an aging hazard*** to the entire Pacific Northwest. We can't afford a devastating "worst case scenario" accident on the Columbia River. Built in 1984, this reactor is nearing the end of its designed lifespan of 40 years. The waste it creates must be safely stored for thousands of years.
2. ***Ratepayers could save \$1.7 billion over the next 17 years if this plant were shut down.*** This according to respected utility economist Robert McCullough, who helped break the Enron scandal. Read about the report in Willamette Weekly: http://www.wweek.com/portland/article-21636-costly_to_the_core.html).
3. ***CGS is not built to withstand quake risks that are now known for that area.*** New research findings on the Yakima Fold and Thrust Belt show that ground shaking can be twice to three times as strong as what CGS was designed for. Read about geologist Terry Tolan's report in the Seattle Times at http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2022173243_nukequakesxml.html
4. ***CGS shares many design flaws with the reactors that melted down in Japan in 2011.*** Both are GE Mark series plants; both have dangerously elevated waste pools, and improper venting that can cause hydrogen explosions. While the Fukushima plant still leaks 300 tons of radioactive water into the North Pacific every day, this nuclear plant at Hanford poses a similar threat to our region.
5. ***We don't need the power.*** According to State of Washington figures, this plant has produced less than 4% of the electricity Pacific Northwest residents consumed over the past decade. In 2012, it had an extended shutdown of six months for repairs, and the region did not suffer power shortages. Wind, solar, and conservation can replace the power with far less risk.

Call to Action:

Contact your local utility in Washington, and tell them you want the CGS nuclear plant closed. Ask them to protect their ratepayers from both the economic and environmental costs of this aging, flawed reactor.

More Background Info:

Located on the Columbia River within Washington's Hanford nuclear reservation, the CGS nuclear plant is now thirty years old. It was formerly known as Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS) Nuclear Plant #2 – the only nuclear plant completed by Washington public power utilities out of five under construction, leading to what was at the time the largest municipal bond default in US history. WPPSS, pronounced “whoops” and having connotations of a mistake, has since changed its name to Energy Northwest.

The aftermath of the shocking Fukushima Dai-ichi triple meltdown, brought on by March, 2011's massive Japanese earthquake and tsunami, has refocused many US nuclear critics' attention on our own commercial fleet of 100 operating nuclear power plants. Here in the Pacific Northwest, with Trojan shuttered since 1993, there is one remaining nuclear power plant still operating – the Columbia Generating Station (CGS). Four US plants closed in 2013, for economic and safety reasons. As the New York Times reported on June 13, 2013, US reactors, “old and uncompetitive, are closing earlier than expected.”

Many who have looked closely at nuclear power issues believe that continuing to run this aging nuclear plant simply makes no sense. If the true costs are included, the energy produced is extremely expensive and the toxic wastes produced pose an unacceptable health risk.

Who are we?

The Nuclear Free Northwest Coalition includes the Alliance for Democracy, the Sierra Club Activist Network, Heart of America Northwest, Columbia Riverkeeper, No Nukes Northwest, Physicians for Social Responsibility (Oregon and Washington chapters), Ground Zero, and Fellowship for Reconciliation.

The Coalition has a multi-pronged effort to demonstrate the unsafe nature of operating this nuclear plant and the manageable consequences of shutting it down. We are calling on public utility districts of Washington, which collectively own the nuclear plant, to close it down. *The campaign has begun and, with your help, we will win.*

How do I volunteer?

The Coalition needs volunteers throughout Washington to help put pressure on the public utilities that own CGS. Contact Dave Hill, volunteer with the Alliance for Democracy, to get involved. His phone is 503-230-0522, and his email is davidcitizen@msn.com.

References:

["Costly to the Core", Willamette Weekly, Dec. 11, 2013](#)

["General Electric-designed Reactors in Fukushima Have 23 Sisters in US", NBC News](#)

["How California Will Use Renewables To Replace Massive Nuclear Plant", EcoWatch, March 17, 2014](#)