

Testimony given by Bonnie Shepard on December 2, 2015 to the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

I am Bonnie Shepard, speaking to you in support of House Bill #2167 as a concerned resident of Massachusetts and a voter in the town of Wellfleet on the Outer Cape, which is the most northerly arm of Cape Cod. We are not just speaking as individuals, but representing the wishes of the voters of Barnstable County. In the spring of 2013, 20 towns on the Cape and Islands approved a public advisory question calling on the Governor to request the NRC revoke the operating license of Pilgrim because public safety cannot be assured. Most recently, in November of 2014, 74% of voters in the Cape and Islands Senatorial district passed a public advisory ballot question in support of our inclusion in a Plume Exposure Pathway Emergency Planning Zone.

Our location puts us at high risk for two reasons. First, the prevailing winds in our area come from the west; on a windy day, strong doses of radiation from a nuclear accident would reach the Cape very quickly. Second, there is no feasible – and therefore no official -- evacuation plan in case of a nuclear accident. Route 6 is unable to handle the normal flow of traffic on holiday weekends and during the summer, as many of you know well after being stuck in traffic for hours! The official emergency plans for Barnstable County recognize this fact, will close the bridges, and tell us to shelter in place. According to MEMA¹, sheltering in place in a small residential structure gives people only 10% protection from dangerous radionuclides for two hours. That is absurd! It amounts to no protection at all given that we have nowhere else to go!

If the Pilgrim Plant were rated as one of the safest in the nation, we might breathe a little easier, but it is just the opposite. The more I have learned about the risks involved with the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant, the more alarmed I have become. Pilgrim is a clone of the Fukushima plant with a terrible safety record, including failures to respond to previous safety warnings from the NRC, and numerous unplanned shutdowns during storms, leading to their latest downgrading by the NRC to one of the three least safe reactors in the nation. The storage situation for spent fuel rods at Pilgrim is truly alarming. The waste fuel pool in the attic of the reactor building was designed for 880 assemblies and now holds over 3,200. Closer packing of fuel assemblies, over design limits, speeds up evaporation of coolant which, in turn, results in less time to respond to pump failure in case of a loss of power, potentially leading to core meltdown. We are at very high risk.

In summary, we urge you to approve H. #2167 out of committee, and submit the bill to Massachusetts legislators for a vote. All of the Representatives and Senators of Cape Cod and the Islands have co-sponsored this legislation, and the voters have clearly expressed their wishes in favor of the provisions in this bill.

Bonnie Shepard
70 Wigwam St,
Wellfleet, MA 02667
508-214-0232

¹ Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, radiological emergency document.