

Mailing address:
Governor Gavin Newsom
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 445-2841
Fax: (916) 558-3160

Dear Governor/Senator/Representative/PUC Commissioner etc.

In February, as Pacific Gas & Electric enters bankruptcy, Diablo Canyon Nuclear Unit One will shut for refueling.

Critical components at Diablo One may be at serious risk. An array of simple, relatively inexpensive tests must be conducted independently by the state. The decision as to whether Unit One reopens must be made by the Governor, Assembly, CPUC and related agencies. Here are several of the key issues:

EMBRITTEMENT: In 2005 the Nuclear Regulatory Commission warned that Diablo Unit One was among the five most embrittled reactors in the US. Because the internals of all atomic reactors are subjected to intense intense heat, pressure and radiation, critical metals and welds can lose their resiliency. Should cold water be poured in to contain a runaway reaction, embrittled components can shatter, leading to catastrophe. The degree of embrittlement at Unit One can be easily and cheaply tested while it is down for refueling.

COMPONENT CRACKING: All reactor pressure vessels and other key components can crack over time. Unit One's age makes it imperative that x-ray devices be deployed to inspect the reactor's internals, which again can be done relatively easily and cheaply.

WASTE MANAGEMENT: Cracking of dry casks and other issues at other nuclear sites, including San Onofre, make essential a full evaluation of waste management issues at Diablo.

SEISMIC VULNERABILITY: A dozen earthquake faults have been discovered near Diablo since Unit One was designed. NRC site inspector Dr. Michael Peck, in residence at Diablo for five years, has warned the reactor might not withstand a credible quake. Dr. Peck must be thoroughly debriefed and the situation independently evaluated.

Normally such issues would be entrusted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. But PG&E is entering bankruptcy while implicated in eight deaths in San Bruno and unimaginable destruction in northern California. The company's financial and managerial abilities to continue operating Diablo are in serious question.

The company must now depend on the state for massive legal and financial assistance. In return, the state has every right and responsibility to take charge of the safety challenges at Diablo, and to make the final decision as to whether it re-opens after the upcoming outage.

The above-mentioned issues do not relate to whether one supports or opposes nuclear power. They simply address the mechanical ability of the state's largest power generator to operate safely.

California's elected officials must now take full charge of this most critical decision.

