

[charlotte.com](#) - [That's Racin'](#) - [Yellow Pages](#) - [Entertainment](#) - [Travel](#) - [Community](#)
[Local Guide](#) - [Weather](#) - [Sports](#) - [Health](#) - [Careers](#) - [Real Estate](#) - [cars.com](#) - [Classifieds](#)

- LOCAL NEWS
- [Today's Observer](#)
[Local News](#)
[Schools](#)
[Mecklenburg](#)
[Gaston](#)
[York](#)
[Cabarrus](#)
[Catawba](#)
[Iredell](#)
[Union](#)
[Obituaries](#)

- NEWS/OPINION
- [A-section](#)
[Nation/World](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Siers cartoon](#)
[Observer Forum](#)

- BUSINESS
- [Business News](#)
[Business Update](#)
[Business Monday](#)
[Click](#)
[Industry news](#)
[Stock Quotes](#)
[Mortgage Rates](#)
[Tax value search](#)

- SPORTS
- [Today's Stories](#)
[Message Boards](#)
[That's Racin'](#)
[Panthers/NFL](#)
[Hornets/NBA](#)
[Outdoors](#)

- FEATURES
- [Living](#)
[Health](#)
[Food](#)
[Family](#)
[Faith](#)
[Gardening](#)
[Home](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Arts](#)
[Book reviews](#)
[Travel](#)

- RESOURCES
- [Site index](#)
[City Guide](#)
[Contact us](#)
[Feedback](#)
[charlotte.com](#)

Posted at 9:48 p.m. EST Wednesday, December 19, 2001
[E-mail this story to a friend](#)

CATAWBA, MCGUIRE

Nuclear foes cite risk of attacks

Licensing board hearsarguments against20-year extensions

By BRUCE HENDERSON

Opponents of 20-year license extensions for the two Charlotte-area nuclear plants on Wednesday raised the possibility of terrorist attacks in a meeting with a federal licensing board.

Since Sept. 11, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a top-to-bottom review of security at all 103 of the nation's nuclear reactors. The commission also suspended exercises that measure the ability of nuclear plants to repel terrorist attacks.

The Nuclear Information and Resource Service, an anti-nuclear group, says the Catawba and McGuire nuclear plants near Charlotte deserve special scrutiny. Duke Power wants to extend the plants' operating licenses by 20 years, keeping them in operation into the early 2040s.

"We're in a new time," since the attacks on New York and Washington, said Mary Olson, the group's Southeastern director. "Something has happened that could change everything."

Duke responded that Olson raises no security concerns that are unique to Catawba and McGuire, so the issue shouldn't become a licensing question.

An Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, a panel named by the NRC, met Tuesday and Wednesday in Charlotte to discuss opponents' opposition to the license extensions. The three-member board will decide next month whether any of the claims merit a more exhaustive hearing.

If it denies security as an issue worthy of a full hearing, Olson asked that the board refer it to the full commission.

Her group also claims that Duke's planned use of a plutonium blend of fuel at McGuire and Catawba, beginning in 2007, should be considered during license renewal. Those would become the first U.S. nuclear plants to use fuel that contains surplus weapons plutonium.

Duke Power insists questions about the mixed-oxide fuel should be handled separately. Duke plans to begin seeking permission in March to use test batches of the new fuel. An application for production use of the fuel would be filed in late 2003 or early 2004.

Opponents may raise any questions about mixed-oxide fuel when the utility files applications to use it, Duke said.

The Nuclear Information and Research Service also raised questions about the effects of age, stress and metal fatigue when reactors originally licensed for 40 years are pressed into service for 60.

Duke said those issues are covered by a system of inspections and programs meant to detect aging components.

Send this story to a friend
Just enter your **email address** and
the address of the recipient

From:

To:

Send

Front page ▾

Go

Living ▾

Go

That's Racin' ▾

Go