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Indian Point Opposition Grows

City group campaigns for plant's shutdown

By Kathleen Kerr
STAFF WRITER

February 9, 2002

Fears that a terrorist attack on Westchester's Indian Point nuclear plant could send dangerous radiation drifting over New York City has triggered a grass roots movement aimed at shutting down the facility.

Activists want to persuade Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the City Council to call for Indian Point's shutdown. They plan a five-borough campaign to win support from residents and community boards. And training sessions for people who want to help battle the plant are under way.

Already, members of the NYC Campaign to Close Indian Point have held meetings in Manhattan and the Bronx, and plan to address Queens Community Board 1 on Feb. 19. The group is an offshoot of its sister organization in Westchester.

The NYC Campaign to Close Indian Point - composed of nuclear opponents and members of the environmentally aware Green Party - met Thursday night at Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village. Their message: A serious accident at Indian Point could spew cancer-causing radiation over 20 million people who live within a 50-mile radius of the plant. Midtown Manhattan is about 20 miles from the plant.

Efforts to close the plant escalated after Sept. 11 and when the CIA and FBI warned that interviews with al-Qaida prisoners point to the possibility of an attack on a nuclear facility.

Coordinating the city-based effort to close Indian Point is Elizabeth Shanklin of Riverdale, chairwoman of the Bronx Green Party.

"We hope to awaken New Yorkers to the fact that our lives are threatened," Shanklin said.

Alex Mathiessen, director of Riverkeeper, an environmental group based in Garrison, said: "The challenge is you first have to make New Yorkers aware that it has a nuclear power plant a mere 20 miles from its border. Winds prevail mostly from the north and blow towards New York City."

Joseph Mangano, national director of the Radiation and Public Health Project, a not-for-profit group, told the 60-odd people at Thursday's meeting that he's planning to collect baby teeth from city residents to test for the presence of Strontium-90, a radioactive product. Mangano said his group has found a correlation among elevated Strontium-90 levels in baby teeth, radiation exposure and cancer.

James Steets, a spokesman for Entergy Corp., which operates the plant, disputed the group's dire warnings when reached after the meeting.

"Whatever worst-case scenario would not result in significant radiation exposure in New York City," Steets said. "Our plant is currently safe in its design."

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