



SITE SEARCH

- CLASSIFIEDS
- ARCHIVES
- SUBSCRIBE
- CONTACT US
- ABOUT TWT

AP BREAKING NEWS

March 4, 2002

Terrorism worries nuclear plant's neighbors

By Stephen Manning
ASSOCIATED PRESS

- Updated at 3:02 a.m.
- U.S. Casualties Highlight Dangers
- Mich. Storm Causes Over 20 Deaths
- States Mull Cell Phone Ban on Road
- Astronauts Capture Hubble Telescope
- Researchers Discuss Agent Orange

UPI BREAKING NEWS

- Updated at 3:02 a.m.
- Sudan leader won't drop military option
- Israel: No mosque outside Nazareth Church
- Switzerland votes to join U.N.
- Israel ponders more military action
- US bombs Taliban holdouts in E Afghanistan
- Taliban veteran leads al Qaida holdouts
- US troops attacked in eastern Afghanistan
- Muslims fearful of rioters get shaves

Click Here
for your
Local Dealer



- SEARCH
- DAILY
- Front Page
- Nation/Politics
- World
- Commentary
- Opinion/Editorial
- Metropolitan
- Sports
- Business
- Technology
- Entertainment
- Culture
- Weather
- WEEKLY
- Business Times
- Family Times
- Auto Weekend
- Wash. Weekend
- Books
- Home Guide
- Arts
- Nat'l Weekly Edition
- MARKETPLACE
- Classifieds
- Gift Guide
- Tourist Guide
- Int'l Special Reports
- Advertiser Index
- Employment Extra

LUSBY, Md. — Peace of mind for Frank Parker comes from the roar of a jet airplane overhead.

The military planes circling his home in southern Calvert County also fly over the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, offering Mr. Parker and his neighbors a sense of added security.

Lusby residents always have been aware of potential dangers from the plant — accidents or leaks that could lead to the spread of dangerous radioactivity. But those worries were remote until September 11.

After that, the fear of the unthinkable, a terrorist strike on the plant from the ground or from a plane crashing into the facility, became more real. It is why Mr. Parker listens for the jets every day, believing they keep watch for any attacks from the air.

"It's a frightening subject to think about. I think everybody has apprehensions about what might happen," he said, standing outside a drugstore in downtown Lusby.

Sitting on a bluff overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, Calvert Cliffs was completed in 1974. Its two reactors provide enough energy for half a million homes. It employs 1,200 workers and brings in big tax revenues for the region.

"People regard the power plant as a good citizen," said David Rogers, the Calvert County health officer. "It operates in a way that everybody is comfortable with."

Just 50 miles from the nation's capital, however, the power plant — combined with reports that terrorists may target power plants — causes some jitters, said Dave Hale, president of the county Board of Commissioners.

"You hear things out of Washington that power plants are a top risk, and it makes people think a lot more than they did a year ago," he said.

Maryland recently accepted an offer from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for 160,000 doses of potassium iodide. That would be enough for each resident living within 10 miles of Calvert Cliffs in Calvert, St. Mary's and Dorchester counties to receive two pills. It also includes enough doses for people in Cecil and Harford counties who live within 10 miles of the Peach Bottom plant in Pennsylvania.

The pills are meant to be a first line defense for people against deadly radiation in the event of a leak. State and local officials have not decided when and how the pills will be distributed.

Plans to obtain the pills were discussed well before September 11, said Mike Sharon, chief of the emergency response division of the Maryland Department of the Environment. But public worries after the attacks made the choice to take the pills clearer.

"Sure, it factored into our decision," he said. "The public concern helped prompt the decision."

Security at Calvert Cliffs also has been tightened since September. The facility remains on its highest alert level and likely will for a while, said plant spokesman Karl Neddenien.

He won't say what security measures have been taken or

Top Stories

-
- Palestinian sniper kills 10
-
- Mubarak says beware of 'sleeper cells'
-
- Egyptian leader calls for cooperation
-
- Al Qaeda eyed for Russian nukes
-
- Daschle doubtful on funding
-
- Many schools keep Indian logos
-
- Veteran petitions for highest honor

even whether U.S. military jets fly over the site. Nearby Patuxent River Naval Air Station assists with security, he said, but a spokesman for the base said its planes aren't patrolling over the plant.

Maps and some plant information have been deleted from the facility's Web site. The visitor center is closed, and public tours of the plant have been scrapped. The Coast Guard and state Department of Natural Resources patrol the water in front of the plant.

Federal officials have said there are no specific threats against any of the country's 103 nuclear power reactors.

However, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued an alert to plants in January warning that terrorists might be planning an attack using a hijacked commercial airliner. That information was uncorroborated and later deemed not a credible threat.

Calvert Cliff's reactors, control room and storage areas for spent fuel are shielded by buildings designed to withstand hurricanes, tornadoes and other natural disasters, Mr. Neddenien said.

But there's no conclusive evidence the reactor could withstand a hit from a jet airplane.

"We cannot verify we could withstand that kind of impact," he said.

That poses a problem for current emergency plans in the event of an accident at the plant. Protocol would be to evacuate nearby residents, Mr. Sharon said, a plan that depends on early warning of a potential radioactive release.

With an attack, there may not be enough time. That bothers Mr. Parker. He lives near the bay, where only one road leads to Route 4, the highway that runs the length of the county.

"If they have enough damage at the power plant to pass out pills, those of us at the end of the street won't know about it. We'll be gone," he said.

The potassium iodide pills provide comfort to some residents, though. The county chapter of the League of Women Voters lobbied for the state to accept the pills.

"Why not? It's free," said Barbara Fetterhoff, one of the group's presidents who also lives near the plant. "We who live within 10 miles were very concerned."

Whether the pills will provide much protection is also questionable. They protect the thyroid against radioactive iodine, Mr. Sharon said, but not against other dangerous radioactive gases.

Mr. Sharon said the pills are safe to take, but some residents wonder about potential side effects.

"For me, with all kinds of health problems, I don't know whether it will work for me or against me," said Pat Jarboe, who works at a middle school a few miles from the plant.

But for many, all the talk about pills and terrorists does little to shake their confidence in the safety of the plant. That includes Pat Buehler, who runs his family's market in St. Leonard, a small crossroads town just north of Lusby.

"I never even think about that power plant," he said, sitting at a table outside the shop. "And I'm only three miles away from it."

◀ [Back to Metro](#)

 [print this article](#)

 [mail this article](#)

