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## Tougher Seabrook security urged

By TERRY DATE

Democrat Staff Writer

SEABROOK — Former plant security guards, activists and a state official pleaded with nuclear officials on Friday to bolster Seabrook Station's defense against terrorism.

State Sen. Beverly Hollingworth, D-Hampton, and others said they want National Guard units posted at the plant.

"I think a uniformed and armed presence is necessary to reassure the public that the facility is properly secured and protected," said Hollingworth, a Democratic candidate for governor.

Dialogue was vehement, at times, during the lengthy public question and answer session at the Seabrook Community Center.

The session was part of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual assessment meeting, where Seabrook Station performance ratings are presented to the public. The NRC deemed the plant safely operated.

Seabrook plant and Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials said the industry has responded and is continuing to respond to increased security needs in the wake of the Sept. 11 national tragedy.

Immediately after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the NRC advised nuclear power plants to go to the highest level of security, which they promptly did, said Randolph Blough, an NRC director with the division of reactor projects.

Blough and NRC reactor branch Chief Curtis Cowgill said the NRC has come out with a steady flow of advisories for the plants — 30 since Sept. 11 — before issuing a security order in February.

"We don't deem these facilities to pose an undue threat," Blough said. "These are some of the best defended industrial facilities ..."

Seacoast Anti-Pollution League lawyer Bob Backus fired back, saying nuclear power plants are not ordinary industrial facilities and to put them in that class is misleading.

Debbie Grinnell of the C-10 Research and Education Foundation said she found the NRC's response incredibly inadequate.

In response to an NRC's official's comment that the agency's security director wasn't available to attend the assessment meeting, Grinnell said it was absolutely clever of the group to conveniently not have the director there and answer questions.

"I think what you do is criminal oversight," Grinnell said.

"I'm sorry we didn't meet your expectations," said Blough, who added that Grinnell could take her complaints to the inspector general.

Former Seabrook Station security guard, John Middlemiss, said he resigned on Super Bowl Sunday in protest of shoddy security at the plant and because complaints from him and others were not responded to in a timely manner.

Seabrook Station contracts its security to Burns Security, a private force.

Middlemiss, who was employed at the plant a little more than two months, said he was denied an opportunity to practice his firearm skills after complaining to a supervisor that he felt uncomfortable with the model.

Middlemiss said he saw doors to sensitive areas that could be pried open with a crow bar.

"Do something now," he told officials.

James Howard, another former Seabrook Station security guard — who resigned for similar reasons — said in an interview after the session that morale on the force is low, in part, because

there are insufficient number of guards who are tired from working long hours.

While NRC officials and members of the audience disagreed over whether the plant's spent fuel pool, which contains radioactive materials, was a soft target, Howard, who worked at the plant for about three months, said the area is very easy to access.

Plant Chief Nuclear Officer Ted Feigenbaum said it was very difficult for nuclear officials to defend their security procedures against the criticism levied because, to do so, would require divulging sensitive information which, in turn, would compromise safety.

"All I can say is, you wouldn't want to be a terrorist trying to access the plant, it would be the last thing you do," he said.

Feigenbaum also said he believed the Seabrook Station reactor could withstand attacks such as the ones that knocked down the towers at the World Trade Center.

A 767 would not hit the station dome with as much force as a fighter jet, which previously, it was demonstrated in a test, would not penetrate the reactor, he said.

The 200-foot-tall reactor dome is really a dome within a dome, plant spokesman Alan Griffith said earlier. The outer one is 15-inches thick and the inner one is 4-1/2 feet thick, Griffith said. Both are steel reinforced and separated by a five-foot air space.

The reactor vessel is underground and protected by steel walls between 8-inches and a foot thick, he said.

At a recent Seacoast Anti-Pollution League forum, however, Paul Gunter of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service said that a 767 would not have to penetrate the reactor for a catastrophic nuclear event to happen.

Fire ignited by the jet fuel could burn electrical connectors and prevent the plant from shutting down the reactor, Gunter said.