

Nuclear power plant officials contest critics' claims

Those who hired the so-called expert should be offered the alternative ... 1250 200 foot towers through their town producing power some of the time if the wind blows.

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LACEY TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP) _ Officials at Oyster Creek are contesting critics' claims that the nuclear power plant's airtight steel vessel, meant to prevent radiation leaks during an accident, is in danger of buckling.

Stop The Renewal of Oyster Creek, a coalition fighting the proposed 20-year renewal of Oyster Creek's operating license, hired a corrosion expert who claimed that rusting on the vessel, called the drywell liner, was bad enough that it could buckle.

But plant officials told the Asbury Park Press for Saturday newspapers that their analysis of the liner and other parts of the radiation containment system shows they are still able to do the job for which they were designed.

"The work that's being done at the plant indicated to us that containment, even if it's pressurized during an accident, will not collapse," said Fred Polaski, license renewal manager for Chicago-based Exelon, owner of plant operator AmerGen Energy Co.

Shaped like an inverted light bulb, the drywell contains the reactor vessel, a container in which atoms split to make heat. The drywell liner is meant to help contain radioactive steam and gas in the event of an accident.

Even if the liner was fully functional, a radioactive release would still happen 74 percent of the time if a reactor core melts or if fuel is seriously damaged in an accident, according to Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff and an AmerGen risk analysis.

NRC renewal of Oyster Creek's license would allow it to operate until 2029. Without a renewal, the plant would close in three years.

The 630-megawatt plant in Lacey Township is the oldest commercial nuclear power plant in the United States.