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The Week in Westchester

By ANAHAD O'CONNOR

Report Finds 'Mistrust' a Problem at Indian Pt.

A federal task force released a report last Wednesday that played down concerns about radioactive leaks at Indian Point and other nuclear reactors, but criticized industry officials for their handling of those incidents, saying they created widespread public mistrust.

The task force, a group of experts at the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#), reviewed a series of accidental releases of tritium and other radioactive isotopes at 5 of the country's roughly 100 working nuclear reactors. In its 78-page report, the group concluded that while those leaks did not expose people living near the plants to dangerous levels of radiation, the leaks were not immediately publicized and had possibly gone overlooked for some time, which created a "level of mistrust" among the public.

The report referred to a leak from a spent-fuel pool at Indian Point that was first discovered in August 2005. Officials at the plant found that trace amounts of tritium, strontium and other isotopes had seeped into groundwater beneath the plant and eventually reached the Hudson River. But those findings were not made public until about a month later, and the plant was harshly criticized by local officials and environmental advocates for withholding what they said was vital information.

The report made 26 safety recommendations, including one that plant owners make greater efforts to notify the public about radioactive releases even when they do not appear to be serious. Jim Steets, a spokesman for Entergy, which operates Indian Point, said the plant had already begun to do that after the leak in 2005.

"We learned a lesson," he said. "We agree that even if the information is limited at a certain point in time, it may make more sense to notify the public, just to prevent the perception that we are withholding information that could have potential public safety consequences."

Opponents of the plant dismissed the report for being too easy on Indian Point. Lisa Rainwater, the Indian Point campaign director for the environmental group [Riverkeeper](#), said it was troubling that the agency recommended only that nuclear plants voluntarily report any radioactive leaks, instead of mandating such notifications. Earlier this year, Riverkeeper and a group of other organizations filed a petition with the agency, asking that it formally require nuclear plants to report such leaks, but that request was rejected.

"Why do we have a federal agency if it's not going to be regulating radioactive leaks at nuclear power plants?" she said.

Parking Board to Vote on Fees

Parking officials in Hartsdale will vote on Oct. 26 on a proposal to increase parking fees in the village to help pay for improvements to a downtown garage that serves shoppers, commuters and residents.

Under the proposal, an annual permit for Greenburgh Town commuters will increase to \$650, up \$50, and quarterly permits will increase to \$170, up \$10. Merchants will pay \$100 for a three-month parking permit, an increase of \$30 a month, and residential parking will go up to \$800 a month, a \$100 increase.

Parking meter rates in the area would rise to 25 cents for 20 minutes rather than 30 minutes. The parking meter rates have not been increased since 1991.

The Board of the Hartsdale Public Parking District is expected to approve the increases, which would take effect on Jan. 1.

“We had a good response at the public hearings,” said Stephanie Kavourias, the parking district’s executive director. “Most people understood the need.”

Much of the money raised will go to pay for \$5 million in renovations to the public garage on Hartsdale Avenue, she said. Concrete in the 40-year-old garage is being replaced and new stairs, lighting and security cameras are being installed. The facade is also being updated.

Those who live in the neighborhood are critical of the work because it adds no new parking spaces in an area where residents said they desperately need more parking.

“I and others felt this to be an obscene error of judgment,” said Jerrold Cohen, a member of the East Hartsdale Neighborhood Association. “The number of spaces available has remained constant at 1,000. That may have been adequate in 1952, but it certainly isn’t adequate today.”

Ms. Kavourias said the parking board had agreed to work with the town to develop more parking.

BARBARA WHITAKER

A Furor in Putnam Over Water Rates

In a village of 2,200 people, the mayor hears from just about everyone when something goes wrong. And in recent weeks John Degnan, mayor of the Putnam County Village of Brewster, has heard plenty.

In April, the Board of Trustees approved a new rate structure for the village’s water system designed to shift the cost burden toward high-usage customers and raise the money required to pay for a \$7.5 million overhaul of the water system. Most residents and businesses went from paying a flat rate of \$600 a year, with extra fees for high-volume users, to a rate structure based entirely on usage.

The new rates led to a sharp increase in some bills — never a popular occurrence. But there was another problem. The village made the mistake of retroactively applying the new rates to the billing period that ran from September 2005 to March 2006.

When the village sent out bills for that period last month, business owners — many of them high-volume water users — descended on Village Hall to complain about the higher bills, which in some cases had doubled. Amid

the furor, officials determined that applying the new rate structure retroactively was illegal.

The village sent out revised bills late last month for the September 2005 to March 2006 period, using the old rate structure.

“We simply made a mistake and we apologized to the community,” Mr. Degnan said.

But residents and business owners are still concerned about the new rates, set to go into effect with the next bill, and Mr. Degnan said the village would consider reducing the rates in the coming months.

Thomas Sprague, owner of Bob’s Diner on Main Street, said his water bill had rose from an amount “too small to notice” to \$1,400. He said the confusion had been a headache. “It’s not easy in this town doing business,” he said.

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