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America's nuclear facilities at risk

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Plymouth's Pilgrim nuclear plant at risk

America's nuclear safety under scrutiny after Oyster Creek's Sandy alert

By [Cape Cod Bay Watch](#)

Nuclear power facilities are always located on the shore of a ocean, lake or river for easy access to large quantities of cooling water. For example, Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station is located on Cape Cod Bay for this reason. Creating nuclear power generates a great deal of heat, which needs to be cooled with large volumes of water. The water prevents plutonium in the reactor from melting down.

Pilgrim uses up to 510 million gallons of water from Cape Cod Bay daily in order to cool its reactor. Water is also used in spent fuel storage pools for cooling and to protect against radiation.

Given the fact that coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to variable precipitation, extreme weather events, storm surges, marine debris that can clog intake structures, and sea level rise, nuclear facilities are inherently unsafe because of their locations.

There were 16 nuclear reactors in the direct path of Hurricane Sandy - mainly at risk of rising water levels and power outages. Both of these risks can disrupt cooling systems and lead to overheating, fires and/or radiation releases.

At least six nuclear stations were affected by Sandy. [Oyster Creek Nuclear Station](#) in New Jersey, the oldest facility in the U.S., declared a rare "emergency alert" due to power outages and equipment dangerously close to being submerged.

Due to a rising tide and storm surges, the facility's water pump used to cool its spent fuel pool was a mere 6 inches shy of being submerged after water levels rose 6.5 ft. It also experienced a power outage that required the use of two backup diesel generators. This scenario could have easily happened at Pilgrim if storm surges had been higher in Massachusetts.



Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station is located on Cape Cod Bay five miles north of the canal.

[Cape Cod Bay Watch](#) is dedicated to protecting the species, habitats, and health of Cape Cod Bay.

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