

## Cape, Plymouth residents seek expansion of Pilgrim protection zone

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State House News Service

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BOSTON — Plymouth and Cape Cod residents concerned about the possibility of an accident at the Pilgrim power plant urged legislators on Tuesday to widen the radius for nuclear power plant emergency measures from 10 to 20 miles.

Citing the 2011 nuclear disaster at Fukushima Japan, local residents said they need the level of protection a piece of pending legislation would provide.

“We are just holding our breath and hoping that nothing goes wrong,” Arlene Williamson, a member of the Pilgrim Coalition, told members of the Legislature’s Public Health Committee.

William Marr, a Falmouth resident, said Cape Cod residents have been “cheated” by not having more communities covered by emergency plans.

“Evacuating Cape Cod is not a feasible solution,” Marr said.

Tom Joyce, legislative counsel to Entergy Corp., which owns Pilgrim, said the push for enlarging the emergency planning zone is “nothing short of an attempt to close the nuclear power station.”

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission last year granted Entergy another 20-year-license to continue operating the 40-year-old Pilgrim plant, which is in Plymouth. Opposition to the relicensing sprouted up on the Cape.

Joyce said the plant underwent a six-year relicensing process and asserted that the NRC would not have renewed the license if it had any concerns. He said comparing Pilgrim to the facility in Fukushima was unfair.

The protection-zone expansion bill’s sponsors include Sen. Dan Wolf, D-Harwich, Rep. Randy Hunt, R-Sandwich, Rep. Josh Cutler, D-Duxbury, Rep. Tim Madden, D-Nantucket, Rep. Thomas Calter, D-Kingston, and Rep. Brian Mannal, D-Barnstable.

Another bill being considered by the committee would give the Department of Public Health funding to expand real-time radiological air monitoring. Both bills were filed by Rep. Sarah Peake, D-Provincetown.

Joyce said both bills run counter to federal laws.

Rep. Cleon Turner, D-Dennis, questioned why Entergy did not voluntarily make the changes residents were looking for.

“I believe very strongly that Entergy is not a good neighbor,” Turner, a member of the committee, said during the hearing. “If Entergy was a good neighbor, it would say, ‘OK, regulations are regulations, but we have our neighbors who have an issue with us. We can address that issue.’”

“Why wouldn’t Entergy just do it?” Turner asked Joyce.

Joyce responded that the company spends \$2.5 million annually for emergency preparations within the 10-mile zone. By calling for a radius increase to 20 miles, “you are suggesting that the zone ought to be four or five times as big geographically,” he said.

Christopher Sherman, director of regulatory affairs for Next Era Energy Resources, operator of the Seabrook nuclear power plant in New Hampshire, said proposed change really falls under the jurisdiction of the NRC. He also said his company disagrees about the need for a 20-mile radius.

“You said you never had a radiological incident, and I would guess Fukushima didn’t either, until... It only takes one,” Turner said.

Under the legislation calling for expansion of the emergency zone, the Department of Public Health would stockpile thyroid-blocking agents for cities and towns within 20 miles of a nuclear power plant. Predetermined protective action plans, including sheltering and evacuation details, would also be required for those communities.

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