
By CHRISTINE LEGERE

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NRC: Seismic activity exceeds Pilgrim nuke plant's design

Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth will be among the first group of nuclear plants required to look more closely at their ability to withstand severe earthquake activity.

PLYMOUTH — Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station will be among the first group of nuclear plants required to look more closely at their ability to withstand severe earthquake activity.

Updated data from the U.S. Geological Survey concluded tremors from an earthquake as far as 400 miles away might be felt at the Plymouth plant.

During a meeting with the Cape Cod Times editorial board Wednesday, William Dean, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's regional administrator, said the 42-year-old Pilgrim won't be the only plant required to do further study on the risks of earthquake damage.

The list will be announced next week.

"About a third of the plants in the country, through their recent analysis, show seismic activity that exceeds their design standards," Dean said. "One of the lessons learned from Fukushima is we're going to take to heart natural events."

The first round of plants — between 10 and 15 — will be given two years to complete their risk analyses. A second round of plants will be given longer to complete their work.

"Some plants won't have to do it at all," Dean said.

Richard Drake, an engineer for plant owner-operator Entergy, had done an analysis on Pilgrim submitted to the NRC in late March and estimated the cost of the further risk analysis at about \$5 million.

In a recent interview, Drake said he was confident the Plymouth plant was robust enough to withstand tremors. "I believe it's just going to be a paper exercise."



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Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth

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