News from Ed Markey

United States Congress **Massachusetts Seventh District**

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MARKEY PRESSES FOR FOR WHOLESALE REVAMPING OF NUCLEAR POWERPLANT SECURITY

LETTER TO NRC CHAIRMAN OUTLINES 16 UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) today urged the government's nuclear regulators to increase emergency preparedness at the nation's 103 nuclear powerplants, particularly with regard to potential terrorist attacks. In a letter to the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency, Richard Meserve, the lawmaker outlined a series of unanswered questions and persistent weaknesses regarding the oversight of these facilities.

"The NRC can no longer dismiss the probability of an airplane crashing into a nuclear powerplant as essentially zero," Markey said. "The NRC's planning baseline has long encompassed the improbability of accidents, but has never contemplated the high probability of an airline hitting a civilian nuclear facility once a suicidal hijacker targets the dome."

Rep. Markey is a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee which has jurisdiction over the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Markey's letter also notes those previous NRC rulings on approved designs for spent fuel casks have considered the need to survive fires of durations of 15 or fewer minutes.

"The catastrophic effects of the airplane fuel-fed fires in the World Trade Center towers indicate that the NRC should reconsider those time scales," said Markey. "The NRC needs to engage in a wholesale review of the security at nuclear power plants, considering not just the threats from ground forces, but also previously unevaluated threats," Rep. Markey said. "The horrible events of September 11 should teach us that we must be more determined than the terrorists and stay one step ahead of them."

Markey also raises his ongoing concerns about attempts by the NRC to privatize the system used to test anti-terrorist preparedness at nuclear power plants. "I hope the tragic events of September 11 will halt once and for all the NRC's misguided attempts to let the nuclear industry take over anti-terrorist planning activities."

Copies of the letter to the NRC can be obtained on Rep. Markey's website: http://www.house.gov/markey/nuclear.htm.

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