



Radiation and Public Health Project

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1,400 CONTRACTORS AT NUCLEAR PLANT THREATEN MORE COVID-19 CASES TO WORKERS AND RESIDENTS - OPERATOR DEFIES OFFICIALS

The Exelon company's recent addition of 1,400 contract workers at the Limerick nuclear plant near Philadelphia, which has at least two, and as many as five workers diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus, defies Governor Wolf's precautions of avoiding overcrowding.

The workers, who specialize in changing the fuel that produces electricity, arrived several days ago, joining the 700 permanent workers for the next 2-4 weeks, before moving on to other plants. They are staying in local hotels, homes, campsites, and AirBnBs.

Officials have asked Exelon to postpone the re-fueling project; the company replied with an assurance that all workers are safe. Yesterday, county public safety officials received notice that social distancing is not being practiced at Limerick. Officials have also asked Exelon to work out a 14-day quarantine plan for the 1,400 contractors.

"Exelon has sunk to a new low, by showing shocking and unacceptable disregard for the health and safety of not only its permanent employees at Limerick Nuclear Plant, but also the 1,400 contracted workers from numerous counties and several states, and thousands of families in the region who could be unnecessarily exposed to the Covid-19 pandemic," says Dr. Lewis Cuthbert, President of the Pottstown PA-based Alliance for a Clean Environment (ACE) .

He adds, "The decision by Exelon officials to move forward with refueling at this time at Limerick, rather than postponing until social distancing requirements have been ended in Pennsylvania, is beyond irresponsible."

"The potential increase of COVID-19 cases from 1,400 new workers not observing social distancing is staggering, especially in a metropolitan area" says epidemiologist Joseph Mangano MPH MBA. "The Limerick plant should be shut until the COVID-19 pandemic is over." Mangano is director of Radiation and Public Health Project, which studies health risks near nuclear plants, author of 37 journal articles and 3 books on the topic.

Exelon Corporation of Chicago, which owns Limerick, is the largest owner and operator of nuclear power in the U.S., with 23 of 95 reactors now in use.

Extended shutdowns at nuclear plants are not uncommon. During shutdown, utilities purchase replacement energy from non-nuclear sources. Permanent shutdowns also occur; since 2013, 10 of the 104 U.S. reactors have been shut, with more expected.