Why is Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth, MA, so especially dangerous and unneeded?

1. Pilgrim's design was terrible from the get-go: Back in 1972, Steven Hanauer, an Atomic Energy Commission safety official, recommended that this design, the GE Mark 1 Boiling Water Reactor, "be discontinued because it presented unacceptable safety risks." (1)

2. Pilgrim is now old and fragile and unsafe: It is 3 years beyond the 40 years it was designed for, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) rated it as one of the 5 least safe in the country, out of 100, because of the frequency of its emergency shutdowns. (2)

3. Pilgrim is vulnerable to attack: A Pentagon-commissioned report rated it as one of the 8 most vulnerable to catastrophic terror attack because its cooling water intake from the ocean is unprotected. (3)

4. Pilgrim emits radiation daily: This could cause the observed elevated thyroid cancer rates; in Plymouth County, home of Pilgrim, the rate is 22% above MA avg., highest in the state, while even in Suffolk County, containing Boston, the rate is 16% above MA avg. (4)

5. Pilgrim's spent fuel pool is an unreinforced high-level nuclear waste dump: A loss of cooling for any reason would generate a fire that would, according to a Mass. Attorney General's report, result in an estimated 24,000 eventual cancers, and a devastating $582 billion in losses. By the way, Pilgrim would pay for almost none of the damages, and homeowners insurance does not cover any of this. (5)

6. Evacuation from a major Pilgrim nuclear emergency is impossible: In Fukushima, the NRC repeatedly advised a 50-mile radius evacuation for Americans. In a major emergency, the Sagamore and Bourne bridges will be shut to allow the evacuation of Plymouth down Rte.3 and West on Rte.6, cutting off all escape from the Cape (10-30 miles from Pilgrim). (6)

Even Boston is not safe in a 60 mph winter storm that knocks out the main electrical feed to Pilgrim, as happened in Jan. 2015. If alternative sources of cooling fail, a major emergency would result, and if the wind blows toward Boston, the radioactive plume would arrive in 35 minutes. Imagine evacuating Boston in a storm in 35 minutes!

7. Pilgrim is not even needed: It supplies only 2% of capacity to the regional ISO New England electrical pool, while the pool has a reserve capacity of 12% to 20% projected over the next 10 years. (7)

Sources:
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