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Article written by Bill Earls, writer for the Community Decommissioning Advisory Committee

Security stepped up at CY

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, security at Connecticut Yankee was increased, and continues at a higher level than ever before.

Within hours of the attacks, one sign of increased security was a police vehicle parked close to the entrance of CY. Just as visible were newly placed concrete barriers to prevent or slow vehicle access. Much of what has been done cannot be seen, site manager Noah Fetherston told a meeting of the Community Decommissioning Advisory Committee (CDAC) in October, but he said, CY has, in addition to adding vehicle barriers, increased security staffing. Access to the CY site, even for CY and Bechtel employees, as well as contractors engaged in decommissioning work, has been stiffened.

"We've also improved and our communications off-site," Fetherston said, "and we're in regular contact with the Governor's office, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and state police."

On orders from Governor John Rowland, armed National Guard troops have been added to the CY security force. It may be that additional people are stationed at the perimeters of the 525-acre CY property, as well as patrolling CY's shoreline on the Connecticut River; private aircraft flying restrictions are also in place. Fetherston and other CY officials will not say - are forbidden to say - what other security arrangements are in effect.

"To tell exactly what we're doing would be to give potential terrorists too much information," Fetherston said. "Our primary mission is to protect the spent (nuclear) fuel at CY and to provide the cooling water that fuel needs. We are doing everything we can to keep that fuel secure and the people of the community protected."

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Senator Daily: Moving Fuel is Best Long-term Security

State Senator Eileen Daily told the September meeting of CDAC that the best long-term security for CY was moving its spent fuel to a long-promised national repository.

"We need to get the fuel out of Connecticut," she said, and shared a letter she had drafted to US Senator Joseph Lieberman in which she re-iterated the "federal government failed to meet its obligation to remove spent nuclear fuel from commercial nuclear power stations." She pointed out that Connecticut ratepayers had already spent "over one-half of a billion dollars" into the Federal Nuclear Waste Fund and were seeing none of these "funds directed to building the transportation-related system and infrastructure necessary to ultimately remove the spent fuel." She requested that Lieberman's Energy and Water Development committee direct the Department of Energy to establish a program to develop an NRC-license transport cask for transport of fuel and other material from commercial sites.

"I've been on this issue for years," she said, "and we're working closely with Congressman Rob Simmons to research the issue of wet and dry storage. But the terrorists have made people more aware of threats from everywhere - and one threat is stored fuel. We should step up action to get that fuel out of Connecticut."

CDAC chairman Hugh Curley said that he also is drafting a letter for CDAC letterhead asking Congressional officials to make establishment of a national central depository a priority. "The

federal government promised long ago to establish such a facility," Curley said. "The events of the last two months have made it more of a priority than ever."

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Middletown Response Still Important to CY

The events of September gave a new urgency to at least one member of CDAC: Middletown Fire Chief Robert Ross. "Our role was always to monitor what was going on from a public safety standpoint," he said, referring not to just his role on CDAC, but Middletown's role even while CY was an operating power plant. Middletown fire and emergency personnel had always been at the forefront of CY's emergency planning, he said, and Middletown had equipment and people to deal with a CY emergency.

"Many procedures we had for a release of contamination are still in place," Ross said. "If there was an accident at the plant, we planned to move affected personnel to Middlesex Hospital." Annual drills were regularly done with Middlesex Hospital as well - in fact one was set for this fall.

"We all have a vested interest in CY security," said Jim Milardo, Middletown's Director of Emergency Management. "Any kind of a major accident would go beyond the immediate area of CY." Although both men believe that CY officials are doing all that they can to avoid an accidental release, they think the best long-term solution to CY's stored spent fuel is removal to a national depository, but see that as far away. In the interim, both see dry storage in durable casks as better and safer than the present wet storage.

Training, preparation and focus on security issues now occupy much of Ross's and Milardo's time. Security around public buildings has been heightened, procedures put into place for reaction to weapons of mass destruction and more coordination than before with nearby communities.

"No one has the response capability of New York City," Ross said. "A large scale event in Connecticut could involve many departments, and we're working with the State Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Homeland Security and FEMA on regional response."

Region-wide, emergency response forces are learning to react to a variety of radiological, chemical or biological events, whether accidental or deliberate. That means training teams to handle radiological and hazardous material, learning what chemicals are used and stored locally, and what areas might be affected by an accident. Above all, both men say, they are trying to develop a heightened sense of awareness, not just for emergency personnel, but for the public as well.

"Think of this as a national neighborhood watch," Ross said. "Whether it's a package that doesn't belong, or people hanging around certain places, we all have to be more alert than ever."

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Preserving the CY property for posterity

At the November meeting, members of Community Decommissioning Advisory Committee will hear from Jim Hamilton of the Conservation Law Foundation on CY's plans and hopes for the donation of several hundred acres of land - and on the steps to be taken and the issues that such a donation entails. The meeting, set for Tuesday, November 20 at 6 p.m. at CL&P's office on Randolph Road in Middletown, is open to the public.

The entire CY property is over 500 acres, much of it woodland, bounded on two sides by the Connecticut and Salmon Rivers. Although CY would like to reserve about 30 acres for a possible

proposed gas plant and will need some amount of space for long-term storage of nuclear fuel, much of the acreage might be suitable for conservation purposes. CY has been working with Hamilton, the CLF's Director of land Conservation, for about a year, and he wants to bring CDAC up to date on what's been done - and what remains to be done.

"It's a very valuable piece of property," Hamilton said, with multiple resources - flora, fauna and archeological. Just as much, there are various people within the community who want to be part of preserving the property. The CDAC meeting will be a chance for community members to have early input.

"This is the kind of process that CDAC was formed for," said CDAC chairman Hugh Curley. "Community members want to have a say in what happens at CY - this meeting will provide that."

"There are multiple potential stakeholders," Hamilton said, "and a variety of possible uses for the property - as open space, passive recreation, a wildlife preserve. We'd like to identify some of these stakeholders and set up some kind of open process where all views might be considered, potential donees might be considered, and a community advisory committee could be set up to advise us."

Hamilton said that CDAC was given a brief overview of what the CLF was doing several months ago. Now, he said, he want to update CDAC on what will happen over the 6-9 months: what an educational outreach program might involve, what kinds of input the CLF and CY are looking for, and what steps might be taken to set up forums and discussion groups.

"In the end," Hamilton said, "CY will decide who gets the property. Our mission is to develop a process that gives the community input to that decision."