

Eight Shut It Downers Arrested Tuesday, August 10, at Vermont Yankee

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VERNON, Vermont—As a plume of radioactive, tritiated water flowed toward the Connecticut River from Entergy's Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant here on Tuesday, August 10, eight women blocked the gate to demand the immediate shutdown of the 38-year-old facility.

"No More Leaks and Lies: Shut It Down Now," read their banner. Four women breached the plant's security trap while the others stood with the banner just outside the security gate. All eight were arrested and charged with trespassing by local and state police headed by Vernon Police Chief Marybeth Hebert.

It was the ninth appearance on Entergy Vermont Yankee property by the Shut It Down Affinity Group since 2005, when the women began their campaign of civil resistance aimed at closing the nuclear power plant.

The eight read aloud together from their prepared statement citing the nuclear power industry as "perilous. . . We are here to Shut Down Vermont Yankee and demand that the contamination from the tritiated water, cobalt, zinc and strontium 90 be cleaned up now."

"Entergy's Vermont Yankee is dangerous and threatens everyone's health," said Hattie Nestel of Athol, Massachusetts, one of those arrested Tuesday. "Furthermore, nuclear power is not clean, safe, or green in spite of the lies perpetrated by the nuclear industry. And nuclear weapons depend on nuclear power reactors, which are nothing more than bomb factories."

Those arrested included three Vermonters, Julia Bonafine, 41, of Shrewsbury; Nina Swaim, 72, of Sharon; Martha Hennessy, 55, of Wethersfield and five from Massachusetts, Paki Wieland, 66, and Frances Crowe, 91, of Northampton; Ellen Graves, 69, of West Springfield; Nestel, 71, and Marcia Gagliardi, 62, of Athol.

The Vermont Senate voted in May not to renew the power plant's license in 2012 when it is scheduled to expire, but agitation from Entergy and its proponents support a license extension in spite of the Senate vote.

"It is unconscionable that anyone would consider allowing Vermont Yankee to continue operating even one more day, let alone past its scheduled closing," Nestel said. "No more subsidies should go to the greedy nuclear industry. The future is in renewables, and that is where taxpayer dollars should be directed."

The eight women received a September 21 court date in Windham County District Court. Although charges have been dropped by the state in each of eight previous arrests, the eight vowed to appear on September 21. "We want our day in court," Nestel said. "We want to speak our truths in open court."

The text of their statement:

"We are here because August is a month of memorial and actions for a nuclear free-world. August 6 and August 9 mark the 65th anniversary of the U.S. dropping atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an act which killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians. It also launched the perilous era of nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants.

"We are here because we have exhausted all other means to close Vermont Yankee.

"The plant continues to leak. Entergy has been allowed to lie.

"We are here to call for a thorough investigation of the NRC. The NRC continues to put the financial interests of the nuclear industry before the safety and health of the people it is supposed to protect. Recently the NRC has decided to drag its feet for three years rather than immediately change the way cooling towers are monitored that is presently based on incorrect information.

"We are here because the EPA has not yet changed its acceptable levels of tritium.

"We are here because the State Nuclear Engineer failed to read the blue prints so that he would know that there are underground pipes at Vermont Yankee. He continues to be surprised by Vermont Yankee's bad luck.

"We are here because the Radiological Health Chief, William Irwin continues to make up data and statistics to support the financial interests of the industry rather than the health of the people. He states that the fish found in the Connecticut River measured below the baseline level when there has never been a baseline established.

"We are here because the Governor of Vermont continues to support Vermont Yankee despite the Senate Vote.

"We are here because Entergy has stated that it will reshape the legislature and get a new vote. It is the people of Vermont who decide what the legislature will look like, not a corporation that continues to leak radiation and create deadly waste.

"We are here to Shut Down Vermont Yankee and demand that the contamination from the tritiated water, cobalt, zinc and strontium 90 be cleaned up now."

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