

CONGRESSMAN LES AuCOIN
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD STATEMENT
"Evacuation Plans for Nuclear Plant Inadequate"
November 14, 1979

Mr. Speaker. When the House takes up the authorization for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission later this week, we will have another opportunity to require tested emergency evacuation plans for nuclear plants as a condition for licensing. In preparation for the debate on this important matter, I want to call the attention of my colleagues to the recent test of one such plan in my district for the only operating nuclear power plant in Oregon.

A number of problems were brought to light as a result of the drill that was conducted cooperatively by county, state and Federal officials and Portland General Electric, the utility which operates the nuclear plant. We learned a great deal from the exercise that will be invaluable to us in improving the plan, not the least of which is that state and local agencies were not adequately prepared to handle an atomic plant emergency--precisely why the amendment is needed to the N.R.C. authorization bill.

As a result of the Oregon experience, we can now iron out the problems uncovered and design a plan that will more effectively coordinate the resources of local, state and Federal governments in meeting an emergency at the plant. The officials involved in this recent exercise are to be commended for conducting the drill and encouraged in their efforts to correct the plan.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for the upcoming debate on the authorization for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the need for tested emergency evacuation plans, I urge my colleagues to review the Oregon experience as outlined in the following newspaper article and editorial on the event; it was published in the Oregon Journal.

Mock evacuation at Trojan was far from perfect

If a drill is a success because it points up shortcomings, then the mock evacuation of the Trojan nuclear power plant last week should be this year's smash hit in Columbia County.

The drill showed nearly all parties unprepared to function in the event of a nuclear accident.

A newly created decision center, set up in the State Office Building in Portland, didn't function well. Gov. Vic Atiyeh flew by helicopter from Salem to Portland to be the chief decision maker. Yet the state Emergency Services Division continued to function in the Capitol in Salem.

This dualism should be ended. It appears that those who want to establish a decision center in the Capitol in Salem instead of Portland have a point.

Functional communications are the key to making any drill work, and this area probably showed the most significant weaknesses in the entire plan.

Local law enforcement agencies were unable to communicate with Oregon State Police. No one called the Federal Aviation Administration although that agency would be responsible for clearing airspace if a plume of radioactive gas was escaping into the atmosphere. Washington state officials responsible for evacuating residents from the Kalama area — as the drill proposed — said they lacked information from Trojan plant personnel.

One beneficial suggestion is that a data transmission system be created. High-speed teleprinters could tie the many public and private entities involved in the plan to a common transmission system which would provide factual information for all to see and use. Which way is the radioactive plume moving? Precisely what decision was made an hour ago about evacuation? The information would be on the printer for all to see.

Portland General Electric, Trojan's operator, is required to stage a drill a year. This was the first involving the operation of a "decision center" in which the governor made decisions about evacuating resi-

dents. Consideration should be given to a second drill this year because of all the problems encountered.

PGE has maintained a three-mile evacuation plan but now this is being stretched to 10 miles, which

involves 60,000 residents instead of a few hundred. That's like superimposing an entirely new plan for Washington and Oregon areas near the plant.

Despite the talk about how valuable the drill proved to be because

of all the problems it revealed, those involved in making evacuation work should remember that the drill showed local and state agencies woefully unprepared to manage moving people had last week's exercise been the real thing.