**Markey to NRC: There Is A Crisis in the Control Room at Palisades Nuclear Power Plant**

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*NRC inspection reports show water leak into nuclear reactor control room known for a year by licensee and NRC*
WASHINGTON, D.C. – Prompted by a spate of unplanned shutdowns over the past year at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant in Michigan, Congressman Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) today sent a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) querying the agency about a June 12 plant shutdown that was caused by a leak in a water storage tank that was dumping gallons of potentially radioactive water into the nuclear reactor’s control room. Documents indicate that Palisades licensee Entergy and the NRC had known about the leak for approximately one year during which the leak was not repaired and worsened, leading to the recent shutdown. To address the situation, the leaking water, meant to be used for activities during refueling outages, was reportedly being captured in “catch basins” with radioactive waste designators attached. NRC documents from a June 2011 inspection of the leak reported that the water had “minor tritium contamination.”

Rep. Markey also was made aware of a recent Safety Culture assessment completed at the Palisades power plant by an outside consultant. Alarming findings include that 74 percent of respondents said they do not believe that they can openly challenge decisions made by management, and only 65 percent of respondents feel that management wanted concerns reported.

“The response to this serious safety situation at Palisades is a literal radioactive drop in the bucket,” said Rep. Markey, senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee. “Palisades nuclear power plant is collecting safety problems, and Entergy responds by collecting potentially radioactive water in a pail. I am disturbed that this problem was known for a year and only worsened due to a lack of response on the part of Entergy and the NRC.”

A copy of Rep. Markey’s letter to the NRC can be found [HERE.](http://markey.house.gov/document/2012/letter-nrc-regarding-palisades-nuclear-power-plant)

Palisades is one of the ten oldest nuclear plants in the U.S. and has suffered a number of safety problems in recent years. In 2011, Palisades underwent five unplanned shutdowns. Earlier this year, the NRC characterized Palisades as one of the least safe nuclear reactors in the country.

In the letter to the NRC, Rep. Markey asks the agency to respond to questions that include:

* When were the effects of the leak first observed by the licensee? How was it decided that the leak did not warrant further inspection or repair? After the NRC’s June 30, 2011 inspection, what steps did the licensee take to address the leak?
* Have inspections been performed to determine if leaks are present in areas not immediately visible, for example, behind walls or into electrical panels?
* Was the leaking water ever tested for radioactivity?
* What is the nature of the “catch basin(s)” that is/was being used to collect the leaking water? Was this basin affixed with radioactive waste designators?
* How was the collected water disposed of each day prior to the June 12, 2012 reactor was shutdown?