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Fukushima USA? Dangerous radioactive leaks and cracked foundations go unpunished at American nuclear power plants

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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Safety has taken a back seat to cost-cutting at most of the nation's nuclear power plants, sparking fears that America could be facing its own Fukushima disaster.

An investigation by the Associated Press has revealed federal regulators are repeatedly weakening - or simply failing to impose - strict rules.

Officials at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission have frequently decided that original regulations were too strict, arguing that safety margins could be eased without peril.



Growing problem: A 10-gallon-per-minute leak at a nuclear plant in Illinois has been ignored for nearly four years



The now-closed Indian Point nuclear power plant is just 25 miles north of New York City. Applications to extend the lives of pressurized water units 2 and 3 are under review by the NRC

The constant danger of aging reactors operating without the highest standards has resulted in rising fears the NRC is significantly undermining safety.

Such negligence is destined to bring the plants closer to a catastrophic accident that could harm millions and jeopardize the future of nuclear power in the U.S.

Examples abound.

When valves leaked, more leakage was allowed — up to 20 times the original limit.

When rampant cracking caused radioactive leaks from steam generator tubing, an easier test of the tubes was devised, so plants could meet standards.



This undated photo made available by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission shows a 5-by-5-inch hole in a section cut from the top of the reactor vessel at the Davis-Besse nuclear plant in Ohio

Failed cables. Cracked concrete, corroded metals and rusty underground pipes — all of these and thousands of other problems linked to aging were uncovered in the AP's year-long investigation.

Yet despite the growing problems linked to aging, not a single official body in government or industry has studied the overall frequency and potential impact on safety of such breakdowns in recent years.

All the while the NRC keeps extending licenses of dozens of reactors.



Defiant: Officials at the Oyster Creek in NJ - the oldest US nuclear plant - said they would shut the reactor down before building state-ordered cooling towers

Industry and government officials defend their actions, and insist that no chances are being taken.

But the AP investigation found that with billions of dollars and 19 percent of America's electricity supply at stake, a cozy relationship prevails between the industry and its regulator, the NRC.

Records show a recurring pattern: Reactor parts or systems fall out of compliance with the rules.

Studies are conducted by the industry and government, and all agree that existing standards are 'unnecessarily conservative.'

Regulation are loosened, and the reactors are back in compliance.

'That's what they say for everything, whether that's the case or not,' said Demetrios Basdekas, an engineer retired from the NRC.

'Every time you turn around, they say we have all this built-in conservatism.'

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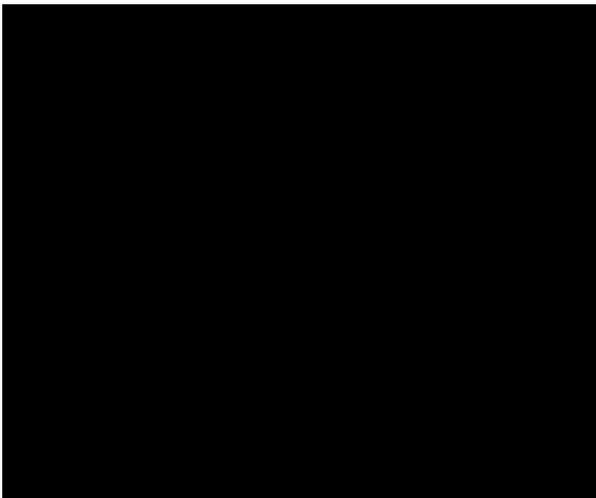
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