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by *Stephen Engelberg*  
ProPublica, May 11, 2011, 1:19 p.m.

Today's publication of our story on the threat posed by fire to nuclear power plants [1] offers readers a rare opportunity. Two excellent journalists, working independently of each other, have produced a detailed investigative story on the same subject.

Susan Q. Stranahan, a former Philadelphia Inquirer reporter working for the Center for Public Integrity [2], and John Sullivan, a former New York Times reporter working for ProPublica, both conclude that regulators are not doing enough to safeguard the plants against fire.

At ProPublica, we began asking questions about this issue long before the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant. The response from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission can only be characterized as hostile. Spokesmen for the agency repeatedly rejected any suggestion that they were allowing fire hazards to persist at the nation's nuclear plants.

Last September, Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman Eliot Brenner sent an email in response to our written questions. It said the "fire safety program leadership" had asked him "to relay their conviction that the time devoted to ProPublica's two years of questions has taken staff away from performing mission critical safety activities on behalf of the public."

In my more than three decades of covering the federal government, I have never seen such a response to legitimate questions about a crucial issue.

I invite readers, elected officials, and political leaders of the Obama administration to read our story and Ms. Shanahan's [3] to judge whether the NRC is adequately addressing fire safety.

@SteveEngelberg · 417 followers

1. <http://www.propublica.org/article/nrc-waives-enforcement-of-fire-rules-at-nuclear-plants>
2. <http://www.iwatchnews.org/>

3. <http://www.iwatchnews.org/2011/05/11/4540/more-likely-nuclear-nightmare>

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