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March 29, 2011: MARKEY INTRODUCES NUCLEAR SAFETY LEGISLATION IN WAKE OF JAPANESE NUCLEAR MELTDOWN

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee and a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, introduced legislation to overhaul nuclear safety in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in Japan. The Nuclear Power Plant Safety Act of 2011 will impose a moratorium on all new nuclear reactor licenses or license extensions until new safety requirements are in place that reflect the lessons learned from the Fukushima reactor meltdown.

“The Nuclear Power Plant Safety Act of 2011 will help ensure that the U.S. fleet of nuclear reactors is safe,” said Rep. Markey. **“We should not wait for an American meltdown to beef up American nuclear safety measures. We must heed the lessons to be learned from the nuclear meltdown in Japan and ensure nuclear safety here in America.”**

A copy of the legislation can be found [HERE](#).

Specifically, the Nuclear Power Plant Safety Act of 2011 will:

Ensure that nuclear power plants and spent nuclear fuel pools can withstand and adequately respond to earthquakes, tsunamis, strong storms, long power outages, or other events that threaten a major impact.

Require nuclear power plants to have emergency backup plans and systems that can withstand longer electricity outages. The Fukushima meltdown was primarily caused by the loss of external electricity to the reactor containment and the spent nuclear fuel and failure of the emergency backup generators. Specifically, this means 14 days worth of diesel fuel backup generators where most reactors currently have 7 days worth, and 72 hours for battery generators where most reactors currently have battery generators that work for only 4-8 hours. The Fukushima nuclear power plant had 8-hour battery powered generators.

Require spent nuclear fuel to be moved into safer dry cask storage as soon as the fuel is sufficiently cooled to do so.

Require the Department of Energy to factor in the lessons learned from the Fukushima meltdown when calculating the risk of default on loan guarantees for new nuclear power plants.

Since the earthquake and tsunami hit Japan, Rep. Markey has called for a series of immediate actions in response to the resulting nuclear meltdown.

Rep. Markey has asked the Obama administration to fully implement the 2002 law he authored that potassium iodide, the “emergency pills” taken after a nuclear disaster which can help prevent the cancer-causing effects of radiation poisoning, be distributed to those living within 20 miles of a U.S. nuclear facility. The Bush administration ignored the law and the Obama administration has not yet reversed the Bush policy despite a letter Rep. Markey sent in 2009 urging President Obama to implement it. Rep. Markey recently wrote ten state governors urging them to join 22 other states who have already taken advantage of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s (NRC’s) policy of providing a free supply of potassium iodide to

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states that request it for residents that live within ten miles of an operating nuclear power plant. He also sent a letter to the National Governors Association requesting its assistance in urging the Obama Administration to implement the 2002 Markey law requiring the distribution of KI to a larger 20-mile radius around operating nuclear power plants.

Rep. Markey also called for a moratorium on all new reactors that could be placed in seismically active areas until a top-to-bottom review of design resiliency, emergency response, backup power to prevent a meltdown during long electricity outages, and evacuation plans has been conducted. Operating nuclear reactors should then also be retrofitted to incorporate the findings of the review. Rep. Markey has also demanded a safety review of the 31 reactors in the United States that are the same design as those currently experiencing major failure in Japan.

And three days before the Japanese earthquake, Rep. Markey asked the NRC to suspend a pending approval of the design for the AP1000 nuclear reactor. One of NRC's most senior staff warned that the containment structure for this reactor design would not be able to withstand a strong earthquake and it was so brittle it could "shatter like a glass cup" under sufficient stress.

Rep. Markey has served on the Committees that have oversight over the NRC and the nuclear utility industry since 1976. For more than three decades, Rep. Markey has worked to secure nuclear power plants and ensure the public safety in the event of a nuclear disaster. In 1979, before the Three Mile Island accident occurred, Rep. Markey introduced legislation providing for a three year moratorium on licensing of new nuclear power plants until a top to bottom safety analysis on nuclear reactors could be performed. In 1982, he chaired a hearing on the distribution of potassium iodide. In 1986, he chaired hearings on the causes and consequences of the disaster at Chernobyl. Following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, Rep. Markey passed a law to strengthen security for nuclear reactors and materials, and a law providing for distribution of potassium iodide to those living within 20 miles of a nuclear reactor. And before the catastrophe in Japan, Rep. Markey raised concerns of the seismic resiliency of our reactors.

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