

Diablo Canyon's earthquake safety is topic of workshop

David Sneed, San Luis Obispo Tribune, 9-2-10

More than 100 people are expected to attend a two-day workshop next week on earthquakes and how they affect the safety of Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.

The workshop will be Sept. 8 and 9 at Embassy Suites Hotel in San Luis Obispo. It will feature a wide range of seismic experts from Cal Poly and other universities as well as various state and federal agencies and plant owner Pacific Gas and Electric Co.

The first day of the event runs from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Up for discussion will be the fundamental science of earthquakes, how the hazards they pose are monitored and how this information is used to design nuclear power plants.

The second day will run from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will focus on seismic information specific to Diablo Canyon. This includes historic seismic monitoring and a discussion of current earthquake studies.

Current monitoring focuses on the newly discovered Shoreline Fault, just offshore of the plant. These studies will be complete in 2013, but PG&E and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission seismologists have made a preliminary determination that the nuclear plant could withstand the strongest quake the new fault could produce.

Earthquake hazards are easily the dominant safety issue at Diablo Canyon. They feature prominently in legal challenges, filed by local antinuclear activists, to an application to renew the plant's two operating licenses for 20 more years.

A panel of administrative law judges with the NRC has agreed to hear arguments on four of the challenges filed by the San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace. PG&E has appealed this ruling to the full commission. If the appeal fails, hearings are likely late in 2011.

To register for the workshop and read a detailed agenda, go to www.nrc.gov.