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Environmentalists Condemn Vogtle Reactor Start

**\$35 billion dirty and dangerous radioactive waste factory
on the Savannah River could spell the end
for U.S. nuclear energy expansion**



Georgia Power's Vogtle 4 reactor in October 2023. An unneeded nuclear reactor is just a giant, dangerous radioactive waste machine. Photo ©2023 Georgia Power

GEORGIA 4/29/24: Environmentalists condemn and criticize the Vogtle 3 and 4 claims made in Georgia Power's announcement that Vogtle 4 has entered commercial operation, just three days after the 38th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

"The fact is," says Nuclear Watch South Coordinator Glenn Carroll, "that this Vogtle monster, this unaccountably mismanaged beast that cost \$35 billion and took 15 years to construct, is essentially a radioactive waste factory.

"Nuclear Watch South has shown for 10 years that [Georgia Power is not using a large portion of its current energy capacity](#), to which Vogtle 3 and 4 add a mere 7%," she says. "[Electricity sales](#)

[have been in a slump for the last 20 years](#) and that's unlikely to change any time soon, despite self-serving projections made by energy producers.

"Now we have the riskiest, unjustifiably complex, and most expensive and dangerous devices ever made to boil water for steam generation spewing out heat and recklessly creating lethal radioactive waste on banks of the Savannah River," she concludes.

Billed by Georgia Power as "clean energy" in a state that has no standards for energy production and with an emission-reduction plan that is "voluntary," Vogtle is far from clean. Georgia Power has only recently started promoting nuclear power as clean, relying instead on energy forecasts that were never verified and never materialized as the rationale for building Vogtle 3 and 4. The State of Georgia does not even have clean energy goals. It is clear that the Vogtle project was a huge capital-intensive gambit for Georgia Power, securing [record-high profits of at least \\$17 billion](#), over the years of construction and delay during which the company racked up \$18 billion in cost overruns. Those absurdly excessive costs have now been foisted onto the backs of the public by a Public Service Commission (PSC), whose members are either negligent, corrupt, or grossly inept. This powerful body is the only protection the consumer has against the powerful, for-profit Georgia Power monopoly and it has flagrantly betrayed the trust of the public that it is lawfully obligated to serve.

While the rest of the world is setting records with installation of solar and wind power, the Georgia PSC stood by and even applauded, as Georgia Power squandered an average of \$7 million per day for 15 years to construct the most expensive electric generating facility on Earth to produce the world's most expensive power.

One of Chernobyl's fatal defects is that it lacked a reactor containment building such as every U.S. reactor except Vogtle 3 and 4 have as the final, critical barrier to stop radiation from reaching the environment. The Westinghouse AP1000 reactor design used at Vogtle replaced a robust reactor containment building with a shield building which will regrettably double as a [chimney](#) in the event of a radiation release. In chimney mode it will channel radiation up and into the atmosphere, endangering millions of citizens, while protecting only the workers on the ground responding to the radiological emergency.

"To save money, the first lie on the Vogtle expansion project that ballooned to over \$35 billion," Ms. Carroll says, "Westinghouse and Georgia Power actually downgraded reactor standards to do away with the last barrier to radiation release in case of a nuclear meltdown, a much-needed reactor containment building. It is a grievous day, a dangerous day, for the people of Burke County, Georgia, and Planet Earth."

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