

## Visiting Nuclear Power Station's Visitor Center

Chisato KATSUKI

Surry Nuclear Information Center( October 28, 2009)

Richard R. Zuercher, Manager, Nuclear Public Affairs

Carol Apple Elmore, Nuclear Information Center Coordinator, Nuclear Public Affairs

Paulin Cheatham, Nuclear Information Center Representative, Nuclear Public Affairs,

Surry Nuclear Information Center

<http://www.dom.com/about/stations/nuclear/surry/surry-nuclear-information-center.jsp>



Surry Information Center(HP picture)

North Anna Nuclear Information Center(October 29, 2009)

Michael F. Duffey, Nuclear Information Center Coordinator, Nuclear Public Affairs,

North Anna Nuclear Information Center

Deborah U. Surry, Nuclear Information Center Representative, Nuclear Public Affairs,

North Anna Power Station

<http://www.dom.com/about/stations/nuclear/north-anna/north-anna-nuclear-information-center.jsp>

Previous researches: Interview researches with Nuclear Power Stations' Visitor Centers in Japan (2005-2006), Interview researches with public relations of Electric Power Companies in Japan (2006-2007).

### Situations of Nuclear Visitor (information) Centers after 9.11

Right after 9.11, all nuclear centers were closed once in terms of security. For security major, after 9.11, no nuclear power stations' visitor center can reopen if they can see their reactor building from the center. Information center of Surry, and North Anna can reopened again quite soon, since they can not see reactor building from their building(it is not a matter of distance, but the matter of physically seen or not). Therefore, there are some visitor centers closed (and may not be opened again), or some visitor centers are moved to other places (move to near city to get more good accessibility to the center, or somewhere in-between two power stations, etc).

### Major Activities in Surry and North Anna Information Center

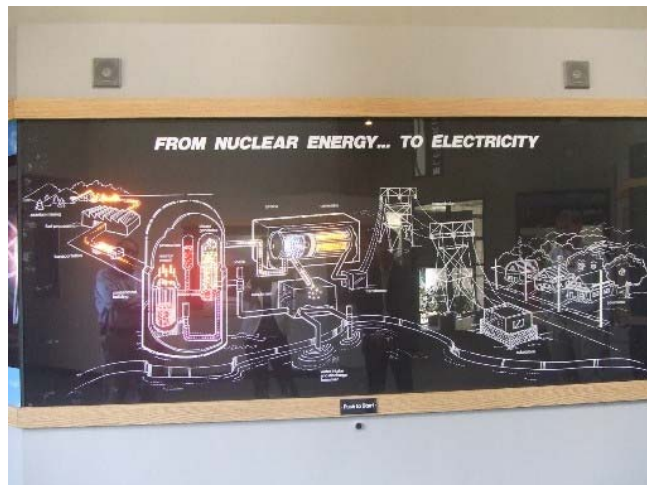
Two visitor centers, Surry Nuclear Information Center, and North Anna Nuclear Information Center are owned and run by an energy produce and transport company, Dominion. The basic design of two visitor center is exactly the same, except a part of exhibition about their environmental surroundings. These Nuclear Information Centers were built at early 70's, and renewed in 1988.

These two information centers are offering educational programs for school field trips and outreach programs based on Virginia's Science Standards of Learning (SOL). In order to help learning about energy, most of their exhibits are somehow related to science education program, from preschool to High School (Grade 12). The program start from electrical safety(for preschool-1<sup>st</sup>grade), about magnets(kindergarten- 3<sup>ed</sup> grade), natural electricity(2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>ed</sup> grade), current electricity(3<sup>ed</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade), Energy Sources(3<sup>ed</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade), Nuclear energy and the environment(6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade), Nuclear energy and radiation(8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade), and careers in nuclear(6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade). One little problem about exhibition is that children comes every year remembers the exhibits, and got board. So, information centers are required to think about "something new" for kids

Unlike in Japan, United States has a Home Schooling education system, so, it is helpful to the small group of people who are doing home schooling, as well as students in public school. Another kind of group visitors are Girl scouts kids. In order to get scout's badge, they have to learn about energy.



Exhibits in Information Center



There is a small transparent reactor model in center, which can see how reactor works. This exhibit is not for young kids, but for graduate student of university, or higher educated people (like employee in Nuclear power station). To use this model, it takes same amount of time to set up nuclear reactor, and need to reservation.



Small transparent reactor model (for advanced visitors)

So, through out year, there are constant needs of education program: during school year, program for a field trip in a visitor center, or school outreach activities(personnel of visitor center visit schools to have some presentation for a science class), during Summer holidays, there will be people who are traveling stop by.

\*Note: In Japan, numbers of visitors are tremendously dropped by season (especially in the middle of January through the end of February).

To major the effect of education program (or effect of visiting a visitor center) is difficult, since there are no standard major for educational effect of the activity. But, in Surry, there was a report from a teacher that said all of her student who had field trip passes the SOL test in science.

In order to advertize their education programs in visitor centers, 'nuclear public affairs' attend the textbook fair for science teachers. In the textbook fair, Dominion made nuclear public affairs' booth for their educational activities, and their own educational materials. Most effective advertisement is teachers' personal communication. There are some teachers to have field trip to visitor center by hearing good reputation from the other teacher.

Numbers of Visitors a year is about 20,000 for two information centers. Numbers of visitors are quite equal to both center, average number of visitor is 10,000 to 12,000 people per year for a center.

## Relations with Communities

Nuclear power stations in Dominion, did not have big problems (accidents), and have a good relationship with communities near stations. Some people are concerned about nuclear waste, but not so many.

Other concern recently is about MOX fuel. It seems that public people are having bad image about plutonium, because plutonium is used in weapon (may be the image of the plutonium among public is “something explosive” and toxic). The argument goes; it is OK to have nuclear power station with uranium, since they do not have any serious problems during its power generation for more than 30 years, but no nuclear power station with plutonium because they do not want to have “nuclear weapon” in their backyard. In order to use MOX fuel, it is necessary to get understanding of community people, but it is still a future communication challenge.

An activity to get good relationship with local community, is attending local fair as a Dominion Company employee. Dominion used to have a tent for Pork fair at Surry, since Surry is famous for pork meat.

An activity, after 9.11, Surry power station had “open day” for local community people, let local people in beyond the security point of power station, and had picnic about 2years ago. It was very pleased with local community, and Surry got another request to have this sort of event.

Not only for public affair personnel, but all Dominion employee has to have a pay day volunteer with community people. This volunteer activity can be anything, like to maintain somebody’s roof or something very small, but necessary things to be done for community people.



Halloween Display at the entrance



Halloween Display in Local Community

## Training of Public Affairs' Employee

There is no requirement to be a "communicator". The newest employee in public affairs, who were hired two years ago, was History major in his university. Any people can be "communicator" with public, but may better be talented for that (may be it is not suitable for a person who is scared to death to talk in front of other people).

As a public affairs section, they do not have any special training program. There are many reading materials for public affair personnel to be read, but training of presentation, or speech are offered by company's training section. Time to train a person is verified one to the other. Most of their training are done by "on the job", because there are many ways of communication with a public. A person who worked temporally during last summer, was very talented, and didn't need a month to do her job. Most of the public affairs employee are doing communication job more than 10 years, except newest employee., so that they are having long experience and having better knowledge about dealing with public people.

One most important point is that all public affairs employees are a "face of the company", and has to build credibility with public (especially local community people). They can say "I do not know" to a question from a public, but has to get answer for questioner. The worst thing is to "guess the answer".

## Others

Lake Anna, which was used to take and discharge cooling water, was created for North Anna power station by Dominion. This lake now is a leisure place for public people (camping, and fishing--large mouth bass, striped bass, and catfish). Since the lake is not natural lake, Lake Anna is not under regulation. But Dominion keeps necessary data under regulation, and opens them to the public.

The new employee in public affairs is from local community, and he remembers his field trip to Surry information center. As a company, it is good to have someone from the community as an employee, in order to get local people's confidence toward the company.