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NRC commissioner: Still no on Diablo

By Margarita Mills
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Important safety issues at Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant will never be resolved, a Nuclear Regulatory Commissioner said Monday.

James Asselstine, one of four NRC commissioners, said if he were to vote on the licensing of Diablo today, he still would vote no as he did in the past.

"My stand is basically the same as before," Asselstine told the press and members of opposition groups. "The commission didn't give the public their day in court. As far as I'm concerned, the issue is still open."

The 38-year-old Ronald Reagan appointee was in San Luis Obispo to visit the plant on his way to address an energy group in Palo Alto. It was his first tour of Diablo in four years.

He said even though the safety concerns are still with him, he was "fairly pleased" with Pacific Gas & Electric Co.'s operation of the plant.

He said he was impressed with the new training building, the morale of the workers and the general performance.

But Asselstine, who has been a consistent dissenting voice since joining the commission in 1982, criticized the NRC for having two major shortcomings: "a hostility toward public input in the (regulatory) process and a failure to face up to significant safety issues."

Asselstine agreed with a federal court ruling last week that required the NRC to hold safety hearings before PG&E can store waste into new high density storage racks.

"I was very pleased at the court's decision. I think it is absolutely right," he said. "And I think what the court said was that the NRC has to follow its own regulations and



James Asselstine

... visiting SLO

Diablo's Unit 2 gets repair work

Unit 2 of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant was running at 50 percent power this morning while workers repaired a bearing in a cooling pump.

Spokesman Ron Weinberg said operators were bringing the reactor back to full power Monday after repairing leaks in the non-nuclear side of the plant when the malfunction was discovered.