

ERIC CANTOR'S NUCLEAR FAILURE

As I noted last week, the VA earthquake last week happened in Eric Cantor's district, just miles from a nuclear power plant. I reported then that the plant had lost power and switched to backup diesel generators.

But it turns out that switchover didn't happen without a hitch. One of four generators failed to start.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission initially reported that the plant's emergency safeguards worked just fine as diesel generators automatically kicked in to keep nuclear rods and spent fuel safe in storage facilities and cool water ponds.

But it did not happen without a minor snag.

According to the incident report published hours after the quake, one of North Anna's four power generators didn't start properly, as it had been designed to. It was taken off line, and power from another generator off site was routed through to make the system fully operational. Following inspections of the facility and its sensitive parts, both reactors were brought back online.

Perhaps this is why they sent all non-emergency personnel home from the plant.

Now, it turns out that Eric Cantor is just as interested in using a potential disaster affecting his own constituents as an excuse to cut government as he was with the residents of Joplin, MO. As he did when a tornado wiped out Joplin, Cantor insisted that any federal aid be tied to cuts elsewhere in the federal budget.

"There is an appropriate federal role in incidents like this," the Republican said after touring the damage in his district. "Obviously, the problem is that people in

Virginia don't have earthquake insurance."

The next step will be for Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell (R) to decide whether to make an appeal for federal aid, Cantor said. The House Majority Leader would support such an effort but would look to offset the cost elsewhere in the federal budget.

"All of us know that the federal government is busy spending money it doesn't have," Cantor said in Culpeper, where the quake damaged some buildings along a busy shopping thoroughfare.

Who knows what will get cut? USGS, as Cantor backed doing earlier this year? Emergency warning systems? Inspections to ensure that nuclear plant backup generators work properly in case of an emergency (and after Fukushima, how is it that those inspections haven't already been done)?

Eventually, though, between refusing to keep up America's infrastructure and cutting the things that help keep Eric Cantor's constituents safe, Cantor's anti-government radicalism will eventually lead to a preventable disaster.