Nuke crisis puts Cuomo in the spotlight again

By Richard Wolf

ALBANY - The threatened shutdown of the Indian Point nuclear plant this weekend, which Ways to Cuomo a major political setback, came just five months after he was inaugurated in January. The incident also marked a challenge for the new administration's reorganization of the Manhattan-based power authority.

In an address Monday to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the governor acknowledged the authority's efforts to keep the plant in operation but said without more information the state would not allow the plant to operate.

But both the governor and Public Service Commission Chairman Peter P. Wiliams said they supported the authority's actions.

In a telephone conversation later Monday, the governor told The Buffalo News:

"We have no alternative but to be absolutely sure that the safety and reliability of the plant are restored before any further action is taken."

The authority got a letter Tuesday from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission indicating the plant must be shut down "for the safety of the public." The order was issued after a "conservative assessment" of the nuclear fuel that showed a "slight increase in the radiation levels." The regulatory body said its staff would require "more data analysis" to determine the cause of the increased radiation levels.

The governor, who has been under increased pressure to keep the plant open, said he would not allow further testing until more information was available.

The governor added:

"I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to ensure the public safety, including the use of the National Guard, and other necessary measures."