

MAR 21 1960

Honorable Daniel B. Brewster
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Brewster:

This is in reply to your letter to Chairman McCone of February 24, 1960 with which you enclosed a letter to you dated February 17, 1960 from Mr. L. Eugene Cronin, Director of the Department of Research and Education of the State of Maryland. Mr. Cronin's letter is returned herewith as you have requested.

Our reply to the three questions asked by Mr. Cronin concerning the proposed nuclear power plant at Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania is as follows:

1. In its proposal for participation in the reactor development program, the Philadelphia Electric Company, a private company, has specified the site for its gas-cooled nuclear power plant as the one near Peach Bottom, Pennsylvania. Although the Atomic Energy Commission is providing part of the funds for the research and development effort associated with the design of the nuclear power plant, the AEC did not participate in the choice of the proposed site for the facility and we do not know whether the Philadelphia Electric Company presently owns or could acquire another site for its proposed project. As you know, factors such as availability of cooling water, location of electrical load centers, transmission line right-of-ways, etc. which enter into the choice of a power plant site are outside the scope of our regulatory responsibility.
2. Prior to submission of a license application to construct and operate the facility, the Philadelphia Electric Company has requested a preliminary evaluation by the Commission of the suitability of the Peach Bottom Site from a safety standpoint for a reactor of the general type and power level proposed. For the purposes of this preliminary review, the Company has recently submitted a Site Evaluation Report which deals with the points raised in Mr. Cronin's second question. A copy of the report prepared by the Company is enclosed.

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This Site Evaluation Report is being reviewed by the Commission's Staff and by its Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards of which Dr. Abel Wolman of Johns Hopkins University is a member. We have requested the Committee to prepare a report of its views on the suitability of this site. Upon receipt, this report will be made public and we will furnish you with a copy.

3. With regard to the failure of safeguards against accidental release of radioactive materials, the number of failures to date has been so low that no valid statistical data exist. From a statistical viewpoint, this is due in part because of the limited operating experience accumulated thus far. The principal reasons that there have been so few failures are the care taken in the design of these facilities, the rigorous and thorough safety evaluations which are made, and the rigid standards in design and operation which are required by the AEC.

Despite this favorable safety record, it is the usual practice in evaluating the suitability of reactor sites to calculate the consequences of a severe reactor accident, disregarding the multiple safeguards designed to prevent its occurrence, in order to illustrate the upper limit of hazard to public health and safety from operation of the facility. In the attached supplement to the Site Evaluation Report prepared by the Philadelphia Electric Company, there is a discussion of the consequences of such an accident to the Peach Bottom reactor facility (Section III-E, pages 7 and 8). The report indicates that the calculated concentrations at the Baltimore water intake of Iodine 131 and Strontium 90, the radioactive materials which would cause the most severe public hazard from such an accident, would be below the maximum permissible concentrations specified by the Commission's Regulations (10 CFR Part 20) for public areas. The Commission's regulations are based on recommendations by the National Committee on Radiation Protection concerning maximum permissible concentrations of radioisotopes in water used continuously and under no restrictions by the general public.

The Philadelphia Electric Company has not as yet submitted an application for a license to construct and operate this facility. Upon receipt of this application, the safety reviews and evaluations by the AEC Staff and the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards,

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and the regulatory procedures outlined in my letter to you of January 26, 1960 will be carried out to determine whether construction of the nuclear facility can be authorized.

Sincerely yours,

H. L. Price

Harold L. Price, Director
Division of Licensing and
Regulation

Enclosures:

1. Letter L. E. Cronin to Honorable Daniel Brewster dated Feb. 17, 1960
2. Site Evaluation Report for the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station, Parts I and II dated Dec. 1959 and Supplement dated March 1960

CC: Cong. Liaison (2)
General Manager (1)

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