

OCT 1964

Mrs. Weston Thompson

Ex. 6

Dear Mrs. Thompson:

Thank you for your letter dated August 13, 1964, which was forwarded to the Division of Compliance by the Oak Ridge Operations Office, as indicated to you in their letter of acknowledgment dated August 26, 1964.

Shortly after the Atomic Energy Commission was notified of the nuclear accident at the United Nuclear Corporation's plant, an AEC Radiological Emergency Assistance Team arrived at the scene and made a series of radiation measurements outside the plant to determine if there was an immediate hazard to the general public. The results of this initial survey revealed that there had been no significant release of radioactive material.

Subsequently, in order to further verify these findings, a series of comprehensive environmental air, water, and earth samples were taken in the vicinity of the plant by representatives of the Atomic Energy Commission, the United States Public Health Service, the Rhode Island State Department of Health, and the United Nuclear Corporation. Some of the water samples were from the Pawcatuck River. The results of the analyses of these environmental samples revealed no radioactivity above natural background. This was verified by comparison with preoperational environmental samples taken by the United Nuclear Corporation prior to their obtaining an AEC license.

Therefore, there is no radiation hazard in the vicinity of the plant or in the Pawcatuck River. An appropriate public announcement to this effect was made shortly after the nuclear accident occurred.

As you are aware, the water in the river is checked periodically for radioactivity. Our regulations require that a licensee report to us immediately any uncontrolled release of significant amounts of radioactive material. In such an event, the company or the Commission would immediately take steps to inform the public.

Information in this record was deleted
in accordance with the Freedom of Information
Act, exemptions 6
FOIA-2004-0234

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We consider that any risk to the public from the operation of the United Nuclear plant is far too small to justify the concern that you express. Perhaps the following brief explanation will be helpful. The effects of exposure to radiation from radioactive materials depend upon the level or intensity of the radiation and the total length of time the exposure exists. People have always been exposed to radioactivity--in the air they breathe, in the food they eat, and in the water they drink or in which they swim. This radioactivity we can measure. Our statement above, that analysis of samples from the river showed no activity above background, means that the level of radioactivity of the river in the vicinity of the plant is not measurably different from the level that we would find if the plant had never existed. Levels of radioactivity many thousands of times as high as these would not represent a serious hazard over a period of hours or even of a few days. We believe that the accidental release of enough radioactivity into the river from this plant to represent an appreciable risk to your children, as a result of an exposure for the length of time required to provide adequate warning, cannot occur.

We recognize your concern in this matter and your interest is appreciated. Enclosed are five copies of this letter for distribution to the other signers of your letter. If we can be of further help to you, please feel free to call on us.

Very truly yours,

Original signed by
L. D. Low

Lawrence D. Low, Director
Division of Compliance

Enclosure

bcc: R. W. Kirkman, CO:I

S. R. Sapirie, OR

→ L. E. Johnson, DML, w/cpy memo to Low fm Sapirie, dtd 8/26/64
cpy ltr to AEC fm Thompson, dtd 8/13/64
cpy ltr to Thompson fm Sapirie, dtd 8/26/64

F. Western, SS, w/atts listed for DML

H. K. Shapar, GC, w/atts listed for DML