



CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

September 11, 1979

COMM
CORR

The Honorable Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mathias:

Your May 25 letter requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission provide you with a full report on any contemplated action and alternative courses of action prior to approving any request from Metropolitan Edison Company for permission to treat and subsequently discharge radioactive waste water resulting from the March 28 accident at TMI Unit 2. You further asked that NRC share its data base with several other agencies which you have asked to look into the possible environmental effects of any discharges into the Chesapeake Bay region.

On the same day as your letter - May 25, 1979 - the Commission directed the NRC staff to prepare an environmental assessment of proposals to decontaminate and dispose of TMI waste water prior to any processing or discharge into the Susquehanna River. The first portion of this assessment was issued for public comment on August 14. This portion of the assessment deals with the proposed decontamination of intermediate-level radioactive waste water from the storage tanks in the TMI-2 auxiliary building using specially built equipment - the EPICOR-II system. The second portion of the assessment will deal with various alternatives for disposal. A third portion will deal with the decontamination and disposal of high-level radioactive waste water from the TMI-2 containment building.

I am enclosing a copy of the first portion of the environmental assessment for your information. I have asked the NRC staff to provide you with the second and third portions when they are published for public comment. In addition, I have asked that each of the agencies which you mentioned be provided with a copy of the assessment as you requested.

A final decision on the operation of the EPICOR-II system will be made by the Commission. After analysis of the public comments on the environmental assessment, the staff will brief the Commission and the Commission will then decide whether to adopt the staff recommendation. In the meantime, only test operations not involving the use of contaminated water will be permitted. No discharge of processed intermediate-level waste will be permitted until after completion of the second portion of the environmental assessment and a final decision is made by the Commission itself.

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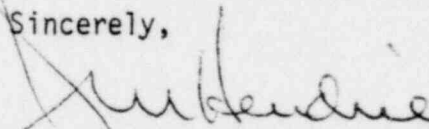
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There have been some limited discharges into the Susquehanna River from the TMI site. These consisted of primarily pre-accident waste water from Unit 1 decontaminated by the existing EPICOR-I system and of industrial waste water as consistent with the facility operating license. The discharge of industrial waste water is necessary to maintain TMI Unit 2 in a safe condition. In both cases the water may have been slightly contaminated by water from Unit 2 due to leakage. However, any releases have been within NRC permissible limits.

I apologize for not providing this response to you sooner but, as you are aware, the Commission and staff have been occupied with continued support of the efforts at Three Mile Island, Orders to other facilities, appearance before the President's Commission and various committees of Congress that are investigating the Three Mile Island (TMI) accident, and the realignment of our own resources and priorities to give immediate attention to the problems resulting from the accident.

Sincerely,


Joseph M. Hendrie

Enclosure: *Mreg-0591*
As stated

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