

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
April 3, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR JACK WATSON

FROM: GENE EIDENBERG

SUBJECT: Congressional Leadership Briefing:
April 3, 1979 10:30 a.m.

You are to brief the Democratic leadership of the House of Representatives on the status of the Three Mile Reactor and emergency plans to protect the health and safety of the public in the area.

Brief History and Context

- Not counting nuclear submarines and foreign reactor sites, the U.S. has enjoyed 400 - 500 reactor-years of safe operations. There are approximately 70 nuclear reactor sites which are generating electricity. The cumulative years of operation yield the reactor-year number.
- Three Mile's accident is the first serious accident in this time.
- It has been a serious accident. The full nature and cause of which will not be known for some time.
- Nonetheless, no one has been killed and maximum cumulative exposure to the population to date has been no more than probably less than 1/2 the dosage of an average chest x-ray.
- The President told the Cabinet yesterday that his visit to the control center at the Three Mile site exposed him to less radiation than an airline passenger receives flying across the country (coast-to-coast) at 30,000 feet.
- The accident produced two serious problems that occupied everyone's attention for the past five days:

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- exposure of the reactor core (if it had)
with resultant possibility that could have
led to the worse case of a melt-down; and
- the development of a hydrogen bubble with
the incremental addition of oxygen which
could have become explosive (a nuclear
explosion was never a possibility).
- o The status of the situation is now:
 - the core is cooling and is unexposed;
 - the hydrogen bubble is all but dissipated
and the risk of explosion is all but gone.
- o The NRC and other officials on site are, of course,
monitoring the situation closely; we have a "tired
system" with an unknown extent of damage to the
reactor core and support systems. The greatest care
and precaution is being given to every move.
- o The next important step (at a time not yet set) will
be to engage those systems which will bring the
core to a cold and shut-down condition.

Emergency Planning - State/Federal Roles

From the time on Friday last when the President directed you to coordinate federal support of state and local government "to limit physical damage and to prevent personal injury" resulting from the accident, you have done the following:

- immediately consulted the Governor and his top staff on the status of state and local evacuation plans;
- ordered appropriate federal officials to Pennsylvania to work with state and local officials under the lead of Bob Adamek, Regional Director of FEMA in Philadelphia (who himself moved on-site);
 - getting evacuation plans in ready condition;
 - identifying and filling major needs that were beyond the capacity of state and local government;

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... (Secretary's Office) ...
... (Secretary's Office), ...
... the Red Cross and the NRC;

- to insure that public health concerns were reflected into NRC decisions; asked that the NRC staff be located at the Westinghouse Emergency Operations Center at NRC;
- other steps authorized by the President to the President's Executive include:
 - the manufacture and delivery of supplies of iodine tablets which can be administered to the general population as a prophylactic to radioactive iodine;
 - establishment of a Westinghouse Emergency Operations Center at the U.S. Steel Emergency Plant, N.Y. to be evacuated from the plant if necessary;
 - the establishment at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania of an NRC operations center; NRC personnel were required to be moved from the reactor site;
 - the collection and storage of food, blankets, medicine, medical care materials, shelter, and other support supplies in the event of an evacuation;
 - the placing of alert centers, military support units to transport supplies, medical units and other hospitalized individuals in the event of evacuation;
 - the transport and delivery by air force personnel or Red Cross to the reactor site;
 - special deliveries of supplies to service stations which evacuation routes to ... 150,000 supplies to ... supplies to ... to ... in the event of an evacuation;

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- U.S. Public Health Service has been alerted to ready the public health units for possible use in the decontamination work;
 - sending WPA, Defense Civil Control Administration, Medical and technical personnel, and other Federal officials into the area to work directly with state and local officials.
- It is our opinion that the evacuation phase and the Federal role in that area is in a ready condition. The President directed Dr. Harold Denton of the NRC to direct Federal actions at the reactor site itself.

White House communications facilities were installed to link the President, my office, the NRC (both in D.C. and at the reactor site) and the Governor's office. These communications "drop-lines" have been invaluable and provide instant communications capability.

- At no time during this process has the Governor asked for an emergency or disaster declaration from the President. Therefore, we have been coordinating federal support for the state under the general authority of the President's role as chief executive.
- We all have reason to be proud of the response of the federal government.
- You should also know that Governor Thornburg and his staff have performed, in our judgment, very well.

Next Phase

Assuming the good news of the past 24 hours is sustained, we will be passing from an "acute" phase stage to a more "chronic" condition. There are many decisions and actions to take as the case is brought to a more or less stable condition. There will also be a need to discuss about the long-term clean-up of the facility.

I have already requested that the NRC's office regarding next steps to be taken in the decontamination of the public health and safety.

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I have asked my colleagues to make the same review from an objective point of view.

When I have recommendations from my colleagues, in the next day or so, I will meet with the Governor's staff to make a judgment as to what recommendations to make to the Governor and the President.

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