



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

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JAN 8 1980

Mr. William E. Long
4822 Tamar Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Dear Mr. Long:

I am writing in response to your letters to Chairman Ahearne, and Commissioners Hendrie, Gilinsky, Kennedy, and Bradford regarding the nuclear power industry. I regret that this answer to your letter has been delayed. The accident and its consequences have created a substantial increase in the agency's workload, which has prevented me from responding to you as promptly as I would have liked to.

With regard to your comments concerning the permanent shutdown of Three Mile Island, the Commission has ordered that a public hearing be conducted to determine whether Three Mile Island Unit 1 should be operated and, if so, under what conditions restart of the unit would take place. Prior to start of the hearings, the NRC staff will conduct a review of technical information concerning the restart of Unit 1. As part of this review, the NRC staff will conduct meetings with the licensee in the presence of the public, and the public will be given the opportunity to raise questions and to make statements. During the hearing, the technical issues which are appropriate to assure the public health and safety will also be addressed. In addition, the Hearing Board may consider the psychological impact of future operation on the nearby communities. A copy of the Commission Order which outlines the issues to be considered is enclosed for your information.

With respect to alternative methods of energy production, such as solar, wind, and geothermal, the Department of Energy is the Federal Agency responsible for their research and development. The NRC considers these alternative methods of energy production in its assessment of the environmental impact of each nuclear power plant as part of our overall review of each utility's application for a construction permit or an operating license. To date, we have determined that alternative methods of energy production are neither technically nor economically feasible to provide the required amount of power at the time it is needed.

I appreciate your concerns and assure you that every effort is being made to ensure the continued protection of the health and safety of the public, not only at the Three Mile Island Station, but also at all nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harold R. Denton".

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
Commission Order,
Docket No. 50-289

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