



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

NRC/PDR

JAN 8 1980

Mr. Richard Mitchell
2516 Springview Road
Norrstown, PA 19401

Dear Richard,

I am writing in response to your letter to the Commission postmarked March 30, 1979, regarding the accident at Three Mile Island. 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.

There was some delay in making public the situation that existed in the Three Mile Island Facility. This was primarily due to the fact that there was a lack of information flow out from the Three Mile Island control room where the information is gathered and recorded. Without the necessary information it was very difficult to assess the condition of the facility. Therefore, there was a delay until sufficient information was available to ascertain the seriousness of the situation. Through the institution of new requirements of licensees we expect that such delays will be avoided in the future.

The accident was the result of several factors including human error, equipment malfunction and deficiencies in design. The backup cooling system for the steam generators, the auxiliary feedwater system, did not fail, but some closed valves prevented the cooling water from reaching the steam generators. The causes and progress of the accident are given in more detail in the enclosed summary of NUREG-0600.

We 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

Encl: Summary of NUREG-0600

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