



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

NRC PAR

JAN 8 1980

Mr. Richard Nelson  
7704 Althea Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17112

Dear Richard:

I am writing in response to your letter to President Carter regarding the Three Mile Island accident. 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 question on radiation in food, preliminary findings on the health effects of the radioactive materials released are contained in the interagency task force report, "Population Dose and Health Impact of the Accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station" (NUREG-0558). The radioactive materials that were released were primarily radioactive gases. The radioactivity was almost entirely from xenon, which is a chemically inactive gas. As the gases leaked out, the winds diluted them. To determine if food grown in the area will be contaminated, the Department of Energy measured the amounts of radioactivity present in the samples of soil, water, air and vegetation.

Based on these samples and other information it was concluded that the principal isotopes in the escaped gases were xenon-133 and xenon-135. Although radioactive iodine was found in samples of some milk, the concentration was less than 1% of the concentration permitted by NRC regulations. Other food samples were tested by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and none of the 377 food samples tested contained reactor-produced radioactivity.

You had a question about the effect of radiation on people. The Department of Energy has prepared a booklet entitled "Living with Radiation," publication number ERDA-76/87. The booklet costs \$5.25 and is available from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Va 22161. Your local library may also have information on radiation in encyclopedias, books, and other printed matter.

I am enclosing a summary of a report that describes what happened at TMI.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:  
Summary of NUREG-0558

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