



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

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JAN 1 1980

Irwin D. J. Bross, Jr., Ph.D.
Director of Biostatistics
Roswell Park Memorial Institute
666 Elm Street
Buffalo, New York 14263

Dear Dr. Bross:

I am writing in response to your letters of August 16 and October 4, 1979, to Dr. Parsont regarding your concerns about Three Mile Island. Dr. Parsont requested that I respond to your suggestion that entombment is the only technology that will permit adequate protection of the public and the workers. I regret that this answer to your letters has been delayed.

First, with regard to the best method of dealing with Three Mile Island, Unit 2. No decision has been made as to whether to recover and restart the plant or to decommission it, nor has the licensee submitted any proposals to the NRC in this regard.

Secondly, with regard to your suggestion of entombment. It appears to me that there are a number of items which must be accomplished whether the plant is recovered and returned to service or decommissioned. For example, in either case the reactor fuel must be removed from the reactor vessel, put in a safe configuration, stored on site or shipped off site for disposal. There are several reasons why these actions have to be performed. First, heat generation (approximately 250 kilowatts at present) is continuing in the reactor core due to the radioactive decay of fission products in the fuel material. This heat must be removed. Secondly, current NRC regulations do not allow a licensee to leave a reactor core in place without adequate safeguards. That is, the plant could not be entombed without providing for long-term cooling of the reactor core and adequate safeguards; therefore, the fuel in the reactor vessel must be removed.

In order to remove the fuel, the reactor building must be made accessible for long-term occupancy by the on-site personnel. To permit long-term occupancy of the reactor building, the contaminated water and air in this building must be removed and the building must be decontaminated. Commitments to specific clean-up choices have not yet been made. On November 21, 1979, the Commission issued a Statement of Policy and Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement directing the NRC staff to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement on the decontamination and disposal of radioactive wastes resulting from the March 28, 1979, accident at Three Mile Island, Unit 2; a copy of this statement is enclosed for your information. This programmatic environmental impact statement will focus on the environmental issues and alternatives associated with the performance of these clean-up activities.

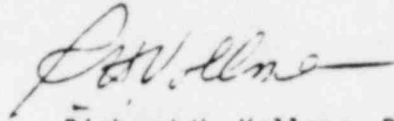
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Dr. Irwin D. J. Bross

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I trust this response has addressed your concerns about entombment of the Three Mile Island, Unit 2, facility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. H. Vollmer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard H. Vollmer, Director
Three Mile Island Support

Enclosure:
Statement of Policy and Notice
of Intent to Prepare a
Programmatic Environmental
Impact Statement dated
November 21, 1979