

NRC PDR



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

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The Honorable Edwin G. Johnson  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Your letter to Commissioner Hendrie expressing your concern about the delay in restarting Three Mile Island Unit 1 (TMI-1) has been referred to me for response. I regret that this answer has been delayed. The accident and its consequences have created a substantial increase in the agency's workload, which has prevented us from responding to you as promptly as we would have liked.

On July 2, 1979, the Commission ordered that TMI-1 remain in a cold shutdown condition until further order by the Commission and stated that a public hearing would be held prior to restart of TMI-1. The Commission believes that public participation is a vital ingredient in matters related to TMI-1 restart plans.

On August 9, 1979, the Commission issued an additional Order on TMI-1 specifying the basis for the Shutdown Order and the procedures to govern the hearing regarding restart. On the basis of this hearing, the Commission will determine whether any further operation of TMI-1 will be permitted and, if so, under what conditions. I have enclosed a copy of the August 9, 1979 Order for your information.

The Commission's Order also identifies a number of items that must be resolved prior to restart. These items, which are listed on pages 5-7 of the Order, include but go beyond those required for restart of other Babcock & Wilcox design pressurized water reactors similar to TMI Units 1 and 2. These additional items include those recommended by the Lessons Learned Task Force, which studied the TMI accident.

The Commission carefully considered the time required for completing all tasks related to the Order. (A Commission schedule calling for expeditious handling of the necessary NRC staff and procedural actions required for the hearing process is provided on the last page of the Commission's Order.) Based on that schedule, I do not believe that the restart of TMI-1 could occur before September 1980, approximately one year from the date of issuance of the August 9, 1979, Order.

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Mr. Edwin G. Johnson

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With regard to the impact of the TMI shutdown on consumer prices for electricity, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PPUC) in its decision and order issued on June 15, 1979, ruled that customers of Metropolitan Edison Company (METED) and the Pennsylvania Electric Company (PECO) would be free from expenses associated with the TMI accident except for a substantial portion of the purchased power costs.

Under this order, both METED and PECO are allowed to pass through a portion of the costs associated with purchasing power to replace the power that ordinarily would have been produced by the TMI facility. However, the damaged TMI-2 facility has been removed from the rate base of both METED and PECO. At the present time, TMI-1 remains in the rate base of both companies.

While we are, of course, concerned about financial impacts on consumers, the NRC's primary responsibility is the assurance of public health and safety. State public utility commissions and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have primary responsibility regarding the rates that consumers pay for electricity.

I am pleased to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:  
Commission Order dated  
August 9, 1979