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

JAN 8 1980

Mr. W. W. Harris
6 Longfellow Park
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Mr. Harris:

I am writing in response to your letter regarding radiation from Three Mile Island. I regret that this answer to your letter has been delayed and is too late to be useful to you in your planning for the conference. 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.

Enclosed is a copy of the summary to "Population Doses and Health Impact of the Accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station" (NUREG-0558). This document contains estimates of the average doses to individuals at various distances during the week of March 28, 1979. The very small dose of radiation that was received by people in the area came from radioactive gases that escaped from the auxiliary building. The average dose of radioactivity received by the population within 50 miles of Three Mile Island was approximately 4 millirems. The maximum exposure to any individual was less than 100 millirems, which is less than the yearly dose each person receives as a result of natural background radiation. Doses at these levels result in less than one health effect over the lifetime of all people in this area. Natural background radiation received by people in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area is approximately 125 millirems per year. To put these doses into perspective, it should be noted that a traveler flying round trip in a jet between New York City and Los Angeles receives 5 millirems from cosmic rays in the natural background.

At distances greater than 50 miles, radiation due to the Three Mile Island incident would not cause any changes in radiation levels that could be distinguished from natural background radiation.

Sincerely,

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

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure:
Summary of NUREG-0558

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