

TERA

JAN 24 1980

Ms. Georgia Mortali
Blood Street
Lyme, Connecticut 06371

Dear Ms. Mortali:

Your mailgrams to President Carter and to Commissioner Hendrie opposing the release of krypton gas from the Three Mile Island nuclear station have 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.

The origin of the krypton-85 is the release of fission products into the containment building during the accident. Other fission products, primarily xenons and iodines, had activity levels far in excess of the krypton-85 immediately following the accident. They, however, decay relatively quickly and are now at very low levels. The krypton-85, with a 10.5-year half-life, has not decayed significantly and, thus, 10 months after the accident, has become the dominant form of radioactivity in the containment building atmosphere.

Metropolitan Edison Company recently submitted to NRC a "Safety Analysis and Environmental Report" (November 12, 1979) in which it evaluated alternative methods for the disposal of the krypton gases. The report states that the "optimum choice from an environmental impact standpoint when potential accidents are considered is atmospheric dispersion through controlled purging of the reactor building atmosphere." This gradual venting, the report estimates, will result in releases below levels allowed for normal nuclear power plant operation, as set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR Part 50, Appendix I). This venting might result in a maximum dose of less than 1 millirem of whole-body radiation.

Before authorizing venting or any other disposal methods of the krypton gas, NRC will prepare an environmental assessment to determine potential environmental

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effects of the alternative methods and will request public comments on the assessment.

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.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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