

TERA

JAN 24 1980

Ms. Mary Tritch  
3259 Foxiana Road  
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

Dear Ms. Tritch:

Your letter to Commissioner Hendrie regarding the release of contaminated water to the Susquehanna River and the revocation of Metropolitan Edison's license 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.

All discharges of water to the Susquehanna have been carefully monitored since the accident occurred. Your letter apparently refers to the release to the river of 4,000 gallons of water containing strontium-90, a radioactive element that emits beta radiation. The entire event started as a normal routine release of waste water from the Unit 1 waste evaporator condensate test tank. Prior to initiating a release, the licensee is required by plant technical specifications to sample the contents of the tank and analyze the sample for the principal gamma emitters. In addition, the licensee is required by the technical specifications to take a portion of that sample and add it to the composite sample of all previous batches of liquid releases made during the month. At the end of the month, the composite sample is analyzed for strontium-89 and -90. The licensee completed both of these actions. It should be noted that the NRC does not require that the analysis for strontium be performed on every batch prior to release because the concentration of strontium is normally well below the detection limits of the analytical method and orders of magnitude lower than the principal gamma emitters, such as iodine and cesium.

On July 26, 1979, the release from Unit 1 was initiated; during the release an NRC inspector questioned the licensee as to whether or not a gross beta analysis had been performed. At that point, Metropolitan Edison management suspended the release and performed a number of analyses. The analysis for concentrations of strontium-89 and -90 indicated that prior to discharge to the river, the effluent concentrations for these isotopes were within both federal and state government standards for radioactivity. In the future, nevertheless, Metropolitan Edison will monitor all water discharges for beta radiation.

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Ms. Mary Frith

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On the basis of this information, there is no basis for the NRC to consider the revocation of Metropolitan Edison's license.

I am pleased to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Denton, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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