

FEBRUARY 14 1980

Ms. Sherry Bromer
15 South Chestnut Street
Marietta, Pennsylvania 17547

Dear Ms. Bromer:

Your letter to the Commission concerning the release of radioactive material from the Three Mile Island nuclear station 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.

The release of radioactive gases from the reactor building of TMI Unit 2 and the release of contaminated water, except for releases to the Susquehanna River of liquids containing only low or nondetectable levels of radioactivity, are not currently permitted. Before any such releases take place, NRC will evaluate the impact and the evaluation will be made available to the public. By this course of action, we will assure that a thorough assessment is completed prior to release of the contaminated gases and liquids and that the health and safety of the offsite population will be protected.

The Commission recently authorized use of the EPICOR-II water treatment system for processing the waste water stored in tanks in the auxiliary building. We do not currently permit the discharge of water processed by the EPICOR-II system. The disposal of the water processed by EPICOR-II will be addressed in a separate environmental assessment, as required by the Commission's Statement of May 25, 1979. Copies of the environmental assessment will be made available for public comment. As Metropolitan Edison has not yet submitted a proposal on the disposal method of the decontaminated water, we have yet to prepare the environmental assessment. We anticipate that several months will pass before any decisions are made on disposal of the water.

As a result of releases containing only low or nondetectable levels of radioactivity, the levels of radioactivity in the Susquehanna are indistinguishable from existing background levels at public water supply intakes from the river. These levels have been confirmed by independent measurements made by the NRC, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

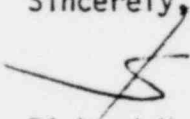
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The very small dose of radiation that people in the area received came from radioactive gases that escaped from the auxiliary building. The average dose of radioactivity the population within 50 miles of TMI received was approximately 4 millirems. 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 area is approximately 125 millirems per year, while people in the Denver, Colorado, area receive approximately 250 millirems of natural background radiation per year. To put these doses into perspective, it should be noted that a traveler flying round trip in a jet from New York to Los Angeles receives 5 millirems of cosmic rays. Enclosed for your information is a summary of "Population Dose and Health Impact of the Accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station" (NUREG-0558).

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,


Richard H. Vollmer, Director
 Three Mile Island Support

Enclosure: Summary of NUREG-0558

DISTRIBUTION

Docket 50-289/50-200

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