



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

February 28, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: William J. Dircks
Acting Executive Director for Operations

FROM: Norman M. Haller, Chairman
Special Task Force on Three Mile Island Cleanup

SUBJECT: REPORT OF SPECIAL TASK FORCE ON THREE MILE ISLAND CLEANUP

Nine days ago you formed our task force and asked that we perform a quick evaluation of cleanup operations at the damaged Three Mile Island reactor. Our evaluation report is attached. We recommend that you endorse our report and forward it to the Commission.

The main thrust of our findings and recommendations is that prompt action is needed by NRC to restore forward motion to the Three Mile Island cleanup process. During our meetings with NRC staff, licensee management, and Pennsylvania State officials, we observed frustration with the pace of the cleanup, the lack of criteria, the tedious decision process, and the erosion of what once was a high priority program. We have not observed strong initiatives to change these conditions. However, Pennsylvania's Lt. Governor has recently issued a report calling for the cleanup to proceed expeditiously within careful safety guidelines.

Analyses provided to us did not identify any serious physical threat to health and safety of the offsite population that might be occasioned by the current pace of cleanup -- a process that may not end until the mid-1980s. However, we recommend further study regarding one aspect of risk posed by the damaged reactor. It was clear that the potential for unplanned releases which might alarm the public, increase worker risk, and complicate the cleanup will grow as time passes. Also, until the cleanup is finished risk to onsite workers will be higher than normal.

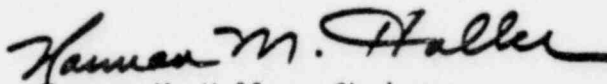
We believe the Commission should announce quickly a commitment to proceed as expeditiously as possible with the cleanup. Under the general umbrella represented by this commitment, we would expect to see increased priority given to cleanup-related activities and some reallocation of resources into these activities. We also urge that the staff quickly complete the necessary analyses and that the Commission then make a prompt decision on the licensee's proposal to vent Krypton 85 from the reactor containment building.

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With respect to the November 1979 Commission Policy Statement and Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement -- a policy some think is the root cause of the delay -- there appears to be sufficient flexibility within the policy to do what is needed while still observing the legal requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. We are recommending that this flexibility be exercised promptly by establishing interim criteria to permit necessary data gathering and maintenance operations. We also believe there is merit to reexamining the schedule for completing the Impact Statement to see if it can be shortened.

At all stages of our review we were impressed by the strong impact public opinion is having on the cleanup operation. Some of our recommendations are aimed at improving dialogue with the public so there is a better understanding of the cleanup and the need for timely action. Finally, we were concerned about the possibility the licensee could go bankrupt before the cleanup is finished, an event that may require government intervention to ensure the job is completed. Accordingly, we recommend that NRC and other government agencies begin to plan for this contingency.



Norman M. Haller, Chairman
Special Task Force on Three Mile
Island Cleanup

Attachment:

Evaluation Report