

FEBRUARY 15 1980

The Honorable Albert B. Wohlsen, Jr.
Mayor of Lancaster
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17604

Dear Mayor Wohlsen:

I am writing in response to your letter to me of October 2, 1979, regarding NRC's approval of Met Ed's use of EPICOR-II. I regret that this answer to your letter has been delayed, although the delay does allow me to provide you with information that is more timely in addressing your concerns.

As you know, the Commission has authorized the use of EPICOR-II for processing waste water contained in the TMI-2 auxiliary building tanks. This action was taken after the completion of the Environmental Assessment of the Use of EPICOR-II and the receipt and consideration of comments from the public and state and federal agencies. Although we believe that this waste water, and the accumulation of additional water, can be safely stored on site, we did conclude that it was prudent to immobilize the radioactivity, thus making it less accessible to the environment. We believe that the processing of the waste water will make occupational exposure of plant personnel less likely and will also reduce from this activity source the likelihood of the spread of contamination to other parts of the plant or to the environment as a result of potential leaks, spills or operational error.

The Commission's decision on the use of EPICOR-II does not allow the discharge of any of the processed water. The issue of disposal of the processed water, by discharge to the Susquehanna River or by any other method, will be evaluated in subsequent assessments which will have the benefit of public comment. Further, the disposition of processed water is also included in the Settlement Agreement currently being negotiated between the parties involved in the litigation in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, City of Lancaster v. United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Civil Action No. 78-1368.

The leakage to which you refer is normal to most industrial facilities which use valves, pumps, and other components for the transfer of pressurized liquid. The leakage did not start after the accident and has actually been reduced significantly by selectively shutting down systems not essential to the safe shutdown operation and, where possible, by maintenance on plant components. Of course, no such maintenance work has been performed in the unentered building.

In its Statement of Policy and Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement of November 21, 1979 (enclosed), the Commission stated that the staff would prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement on the decontamination and disposal of radioactive wastes resulting from the Three Mile Island, Unit 2, accident. The statement emphasizes the Commission's intention to (1) coordinate its actions on this matter with the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and

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(2) provide the opportunity for public comments. The programmatic environmental impact statement will focus on the environmental issues and alternative methods associated with the performance of these cleanup activities. Public meetings are being held in the Harrisburg-Middletown area to discuss the scope of the impact statement. The first of these was held at The Forum in Harrisburg on January 29, 1980. The second meeting was held on February 12, 1980, at the Liberty Fire Hall in Middletown, Pennsylvania.

Currently, about 100,000 gallons of water have been processed by EPICOR-II and about 330,000 gallons remain to be processed. Experience with the use of EPICOR-II has been satisfactory although the licensee has experienced recent difficulties because of the chemical nature of some batches of waste water. This is in the process of being resolved. The overall experience has been that the decontamination factors anticipated in the Environmental Assessment have been met or exceeded. This has been independently verified by measurements made by the State of Maryland.

I hope that I have been responsive to your concerns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (301) 492-7347.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:
Richard H. Vollmer

Richard H. Vollmer, Director
Three Mile Island Support

Enclosure:
Statement of Policy and Notice
of Intent to Prepare a
Programmatic Environmental
Impact Statement

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