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FEBRUARY 28 1980

Ms. Jane Perkins  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Pennsylvania Social Services Union  
2903 North 7th Street  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110

Dear Ms. Perkins:

Your letter to Commissioner Hendrie expressing your desire to close TMI permanently and your concern about the release of radioactive gas and water 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 Commission has ordered that a public hearing be conducted to determine whether TMI Unit 1 should be operated and, if so, under what conditions the restart would take place. Prior to start of the hearings, the NRC staff will conduct a review of technical information concerning the restart of Unit 1. As part of this review, the NRC staff will conduct meetings with the licensee in the presence of the public, and the public will be given the opportunity to raise questions and to make statements. During the hearing, the technical issues that are appropriate to assure the public health and safety will also be addressed. In addition, the Hearing Board may consider the psychological impact of future operation on the nearby communities. A copy of the Commission Order that outlines the issues to be considered is enclosed for your information.

With regard to Unit 2, the licensee has not yet submitted to the NRC a proposal for overall plant recovery, although the licensee is conducting feasibility studies. It is not possible at this time to determine when such proposals for recovery may be submitted or how much time will be needed for the required reviews and approvals in connection with Unit 2's recovery. I would note, however, that the licensee's authority to operate Unit 2, except for those actions necessary to keep the reactor shut down, was suspended by Order of July 20, 1979.

Regarding your concern about the release of radioactive material from TMI, 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

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Ms. Jane Perkins

- 2 -

FEBRUARY 28 1980

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.

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,

Original signed by  
E. G. Case

Harold R. Denton, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosure: Commission Order dated August 9, 1979

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*Handwritten initials and date: EGC 2/20*

OFFICE	TMI/TF <i>WSD</i>	TMI/TF <i>AS</i>	TMI Support	NRR: D/DTR	NRR: DIR
SURNAME	WOTiu: bmf	SMiner	<i>RVollmer</i>	<i>ECase</i>	HDenton
DATE	<i>2/12/80</i>	<i>2/12/80</i>	<i>2/14/80</i>		