

FEB 25 1980

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POOR QUALITY PAGES

Ms. Charlette Morrison
3234 McMackin Road
Madison, Ohio 44057

Dear Ms. Morrison:

Your letter to the Commission regarding the management of nuclear waste has been referred to me for response. I regret that this answer has been delayed. The accident at Three Mile Island 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 goal of the U.S. nuclear waste management program is to provide assurance that existing and future nuclear waste from military and civilian activities can be isolated from the biosphere so as to pose no significant threat to public health and safety or to the environment. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is responsible for providing the framework of criteria and regulations that will ensure that the disposal methods developed for all types of radioactive waste are consistent with the achievement of this goal of safe, long-term waste disposal.

With regard to your questions about the storage of radioactive waste generated at nuclear plants, dry contaminated wastes are packed in steel drums and shipped to burial sites which are licensed by the NRC to accept such wastes. Liquid wastes are held in tanks prior to processing. The processing may be done several ways but the end result is that the radioactivity is fixed in a solid form. For example, the contaminated liquid can be made into cement inside a steel drum. The drum would then be shipped to a burial site.

Plutonium and other transuranic materials are contained in the spent fuel rods which are stored in pools. Currently, national policy does not permit these to be processed. However, there are ways of keeping plutonium from entering the environment. The Department of Energy is developing the technology for treating these wastes most effectively.

I am pleased to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Richard H. Volimer

Richard H. Volimer, Director
Three Mile Island Support

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