

THE WHITAKER FOUNDATION
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Mary 1, 1980

Dr. Bernard J. Snyder
Program Director
Three Mile Island Program Office
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Dr. Snyder:

This is in response to your letter of April 21, 1980 with which you sent me copies of the NRC Staff Report entitled "Environmental Assessment for Decontamination of the Three Mile Island Unit 2 Reactor Building Atmosphere" and its two addenda. I have attended two meetings in the Harrisburg area in which the subject was thoroughly reviewed for two groups having business interests. As to my own qualifications to comment on the purging of the krypton-85, I should point out that prior to my retirement, and until quite recently, I was a licensed professional mechanical engineer in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. My business career spanned almost 43 years in the gas utility business. I am thoroughly conversant with safe purging procedures, though, of course, have little knowledge of the special problems involved with radioactive substances.

My point in writing is to urge prompt action to implement the reactor building purge alternative described in paragraph 6.1 on page 6-1 of your Draft NRC Staff Report. It appears to me far and away to be the safest and most expeditious method of gaining access to the building so that Unit 2 can be cleaned up as quickly as possible. I am convinced the long time delays, risks, and complexities attendant on the other alternatives present far more hazard to the public and workers than are involved with the recommended procedure. From your addendum No. 2 it would appear that it is too late in the spring to do the purging in a short time by taking advantage of atmospheric conditions in the high-volume purge described. It is obvious, however, that in instituting the first alternative, estimated to require 60 days at the proposed venting rates, advantage can be taken of favorable wind velocities to reduce the overall time required to vent the krypton-85 and make the containment building safe for worker entry.

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The very complete set-up for monitoring by the several agencies involved, one of which includes local citizenry, should certainly give very prompt indications if, during such periods of more rapid venting, radiation appears to be approaching the safe limits established for the first alternative procedure.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the staff report and to give you my comments.

Sincerely,

Leonard B. Richards
Executive Director

LBR/w