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

APR 3 1980

Ms. Leslie Nichols
804 McKeveett Road
Santa Paula, CA 93060

Dear Ms. Nichols:

I am writing in response to your letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission regarding the transporting of radioactive wastes from the Three Mile Island facility. I regret that this answer to your letter has been delayed. The accident and its consequences have created a substantial increase in the agency's workload, which has prevented me from responding to you as promptly as I would have liked to.

The Commission has authorized the use of the EPICOR-II water-treatment system for processing the wastewater stored in tanks in the auxiliary building of TMI-2. The precautions and regulations related to disposal and transportation of the waste from EPICOR-II processing are discussed in the Environmental Assessment of EPICOR-II. This Assessment evaluated the pertinent issues of waste transportation associated with EPICOR-II processing and with possible alternative methods. The EPICOR-II method was approved by NRC after considering public comments on the Assessment. Enclosed for your information is a copy of the Environmental Assessment (NUREG-0591).

All shipments of radioactive wastes must meet NRC and Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations regarding such shipments. Thus, before any radioactive wastes are transported from Three Mile Island, all routes are established ahead of time. All pertinent state officials along the route are notified of when and where shipments will be passing through and some offer escorts, such as state police for the vehicles. All trucks are inspected by DOT and all packaging of the wastes is inspected by NRC before leaving the TMI site to be sure that they conform to the regulations. These precautions are taken to ensure the safety of the public all along the transportation routes.

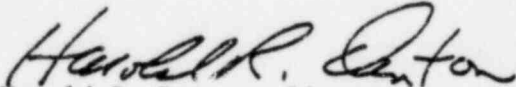
The goal of the U.S. Nuclear Waste Management Program is to provide assurance that existing and future nuclear waste from military and civilian activities, including spent fuel from the once-through nuclear power cycle, can be isolated from the biosphere so as to pose no significant threat to public health and safety and 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.

The NRC's authority to license and regulate the storage and disposal of radioactive wastes is derived from three statutes: the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. To implement this authority and to provide guidance to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the industry, and the public, the NRC is developing new or revised regulations for such storage and disposal. These regulations will require conformance with a fixed set of minimally acceptable performance standards for waste management activities while providing for flexibility in the technological approach.

The DOE responsibilities concerning radioactive waste disposal are limited to high-level wastes and to only those low-level wastes produced as part of DOE's programs. Their responsibility does not include commercially generated low-level wastes.

I 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, not only at the Three Mile Island Station, but also along all the routes for waste transport and at all nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,


Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Encl: Environmental Assessment of EPICOR-II (NUREG-0591)