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

AUGUST 15 1980

Ms. Joan E. Ladd  
114 Pilgrim Road  
Haverhill, Massachusetts 01830

Dear Ms. Ladd:

Your letter to President Carter about the release of radioactive material from the Three Mile Island nuclear station was referred to me for response.

Except for releases to the Susquehanna River of liquids containing only low or nondetectable levels of radioactivity, the release of contaminated water is not currently permitted. The Commission 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 is addressed in the programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) on the decontamination and disposal of radioactive waste at Three Mile Island. Copies of the PEIS are being made available for public comment.

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.

With regard to your concern about the purging of the radioactive krypton gas from the reactor building of TMI Unit 2, Metropolitan Edison Company submitted to NRC a "Safety Analysis and Environmental Report" (November 13, 1979) in which it evaluated alternative methods for the disposal of the krypton gases, such as purging and cryogenic processing, and selective absorption. NRC also evaluated alternative methods for disposal of the krypton gas to determine what effect decontamination would have on workers, on the public health and safety, and on the environment. Based on its evaluation, NRC issued an environmental assessment (NUREG-0662 and two addenda) for public comment on March 26, 1980, and received approximately 800 comments. These comments were considered in the staff's preparation of the "Final Environmental Assessment for Decontamination of the Three Mile Island Unit 2 Reactor Building Atmosphere" (NUREG-0662), vols. 1 and 2, copies of which are enclosed for your information.

From this process have emerged the following NRC staff conclusions:

- The potential physical health impact on the public of using any of the proposed strategies for removing the krypton-85 is negligible.
- The potential psychological impact is likely to grow the longer it takes to reach a decision, get started, and complete the process.

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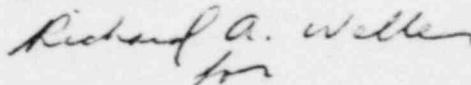
- The purging method is the quickest and the safest for the workers on Three Mile Island to accomplish.
- Overall, no significant environmental impact would result from use of any of the alternatives discussed in the assessment.

On June 12, 1980, the Commission issued an Order for Temporary Modification of License, authorizing controlled purging of the krypton-85 from the reactor building atmosphere. In a separate Memorandum and Order, also issued on June 12, 1980, the Commission discussed rationale for its decision. Actual venting operations began on June 28, 1980, and were completed on July 11, 1980. The doses resulting from the purge were well within those predicted in section 7.1 of volume 1 of NRC's final environmental assessment. Copies of both Commission issuances are also enclosed.

NRC's primary responsibility consists in the licensing, inspection, and enforcement of regulations for nuclear power plants in the interest of public health and safety and for the protection of the environment. Changes in NRC's regulatory responsibilities can stem from the public's will and the resulting Congressional action.

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 Three Mile Island, but also at all nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,



Bernard J. Snyder, Program Director  
Three Mile Island Program Office  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

- Enclosures:
1. NUREG-0662, vols. 1 & 2
  2. Order for Temporary Modification of License of June 12, 1980
  3. Memorandum and Order of June 12, 1980