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

Docket No. 50-320

AUGUST 18 1980

Mr. Joseph H. Eenigenburg
54 W. 153rd Place
So. Holland, Ill. 60473

Dear Mr. Eenigenburg:

This letter is in response to your letter of July 4, 1980 to Mr. Harold Denton concerning your thoughts and questions on cleanup activities at Three Mile Island.

We agree with you that the purging of Kr-85 from the TMI-2 reactor building poses little risk to the health and safety of the public and that delaying the purge would only increase the likelihood of continued deterioration in the status of the plant. The bases for our statements are elaborated in Section 7 (Health Effects) and Section 5 (Need for Decontamination of the Reactor Building Atmosphere) of the staff's Final Environmental Assessment for Decontamination of the Three Mile Island Unit 2 Reactor Building Atmosphere (NUREG-0662, Volume 1) which is enclosed for your information. It should be noted that the purge of the TMI-2 reactor building commenced on June 28, 1980 and was essentially completed on July 11, 1980. Additionally, the reactor building was entered by a 2-man crew on July 23, 1980 for radiation mapping and surveying and visual inspection of the 305-foot elevation of the building.

With respect to your concerns about the extent of damage to the core and the difficulty of removing it from the reactor pressure vessel, we won't know the extent of damage until the pressure vessel head is removed and the core and internal structure are visually examined. We do anticipate that core removal will be a difficult but achievable task, requiring special tools and techniques. More likely than not, we will find individual fuel elements fused together which will require mechanical separation (e.g. cutting apart) for removal from the vessel. The initiation of core defueling will not begin for several years and will necessarily follow major decontamination activities in the reactor building to minimize personnel exposure during defueling.

You suggest converting Units 1 and 2 to fossil fuel power plants. With regard to the possible future operation of TMI-1, the Commission has ordered that a public hearing be conducted to determine whether the facility 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 which are appropriate to assure the public health and safety will also be addressed. In addition, the Atomic Safety and

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Licensing Board has indicated that NRC should consider the psychological impact of future operation on the nearby communities. A copy of the Commission Order which outlines the issues to be considered is enclosed for your information.

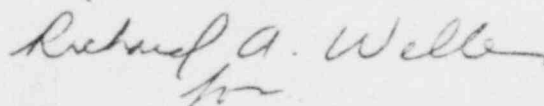
With regard to Three Mile Island Unit 2, the licensee has not yet submitted to the NRC a proposal for overall plant recovery, although the licensee is conducting feasibility studies. It is not possible at this time to determine when such proposals for recovery may be submitted or how much time will be 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 shutdown, was suspended by Order of July 20, 1979.

With regard to your recommendation that the Federal government financially support a great portion of the cleanup costs as well as the conversion of the Units to fossil fueled plants, we have concerns about the financial impacts of the cleanup on consumers, however, the NRC's primary responsibility is the assurance of public health and safety. State public utility commissions and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have primary responsibility regarding the rates that consumers pay for utility services. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), in a decision and order of June 15, 1979, ruled that costs of damages caused by the accident at Three Mile Island would not be included in the present rate base for customers of Metropolitan Edison and the Pennsylvania Electric Company. These customers will, however, be responsible for costs associated with purchasing power to replace power that would have been provided by the TMI facility. The Pennsylvania PUC reaffirmed this decision in an order of May 23, 1980.

In the same order, they also ruled that Three Mile Island Unit 1 be removed from the Metropolitan Edison and Pennsylvania Electric Company rate bases. As a result, their customers will be free of all maintenance, interest, and capital-cost expenses associated with Unit 1. Should Unit 1 be returned to service, costs associated with its operation would, of course, become part of the rate structure.

I trust that these responses adequately address your concerns.

Sincerely,



Bernard J. Snyder, Program Director
TMI Program Office
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosures:

1. NUREG-0662, Volume 1
2. August 9 Order