



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

AUG 11 1980

Dr. Kenneth G. Krout
1406 West Market Street
York, Pennsylvania 17404

Dear Dr. Krout:

Your letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission expressing your concerns about nuclear energy has been referred to me for response.

Information about the accident made available to the public was confusing for a number of reasons. Some problems were attributable to the sources of information, some to the way in which information was made available to the press, and some to how the press reported the information it obtained. NRC's information was not always complete nor, in some instances, wholly accurate.

We recognize the importance of making complete and accurate information available to the public. Consequently, we have made specific plans for providing information to the public for such potentially serious accidents as occurred at Three Mile Island. These plans include making the availability of public information part of NRC's and the utilities' emergency response planning. Under this policy, the utilities must provide offsite locations for newscenters. We also plan to appoint a senior NRC official responsible for coordinating NRC information activities during an emergency. By centralizing the gathering and dissemination of NRC's information, we will provide the public with relevant and timely information.

We have taken a number of actions with respect to all nuclear power plants as a result of the accident at Three Mile Island. Specifically, full-time inspectors have been assigned to each operating plant utilizing Babcock and Wilcox pressurized water reactors like those at Three Mile Island. In addition, all these plants were shut down and the licensees of each plant were instructed to provide us with additional information about their facilities in light of the accident. After review of the information provided, orders were issued to the licensees that required them to make immediate plant modifications, to provide additional operator training, and to reverse certain operating procedures. Additional long-term actions were ordered to further upgrade certain plant systems and operator training and procedures. All of these plants, except of course the Three Mile Island plant, have complied with the orders and have been permitted to resume operation.

In addition, licensees of all operating plants utilizing pressurized water reactors have been instructed to take specific actions with regard to the status of certain equipment, plant procedures, operator actions, and facility designs. Licensees of all operating plants, including those utilizing boiling water reactors,

have been instructed to provide us with additional information with regard to their facilities in light of the accident at Three Mile Island. We are currently reviewing the information provided. As soon as our review is complete, orders for modifications, as appropriate, will be issued to provide additional protection to the health and safety of the public.

In addition to the actions outlined above, as a result of TMI-2, studies were initiated in the areas of emergency preparedness, operator licensing reassessment, loss of feedwater event, small-break loss of coolant accidents, and lessons learned from the accident. In a number of areas work has progressed to the point where additional licensee requirements have been recommended. A number of these recommendations have been approved and efforts have begun to implement them.

With regard to your concern about the management of cleanup activities, the NRC was created by Congress to regulate the commercial use of nuclear energy. Thus, while it is outside the authority of the Commission to physically manage decontamination operations at TMI-2, we intend to fully implement the regulatory process in determining the acceptability of those operations as conducted by the licensee. Presently, 15 Commission professional representatives are at the TMI site. Their task is to review all proposed cleanup plans, including the review and approval of detailed operating procedures, and to maintain surveillance of those operations that NRC has authorized. No future actions can be taken at the site without the NRC's review and approval.

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, 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 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:

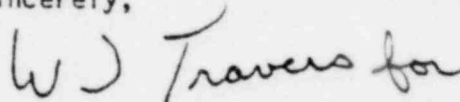
- The potential physical health impact on the public of using any of the proposed strategies for removing the krypton-85 is negligible.
- The potential psychological impact is likely to grow the longer it takes to reach a decision, get started, and complete the process.
- The purging method is the quickest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

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