

REGULATORY DOCKET FILE COPY

AUG 11 1980

Ms. Vera C. Mills
Ms. Florence C. Kramer
5350 Brookway #4
Columbia, Maryland 21044

Dear Ms. Mills and Ms. Kramer:

Your letter to President Carter about cleaning up contaminated water at the Three Mile Island nuclear station was referred to me for response. I regret that this answer 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.

In its Statement of Policy and Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement of November 21, 1979, the Commission stated that the staff would prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) on the decontamination and disposal of radioactive wastes resulting from the accident at Three Mile Island Unit 2. The statement emphasizes the Commission's intention to coordinate its actions on this matter with the President's Council on Environmental Quality and to provide the opportunity for public comments. The PEIS will focus on the environmental issues and alternative methods associated with the performance of these cleanup activities.

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 will be addressed in the PEIS being prepared on the decontamination and disposal of radioactive waste at Three Mile Island. Copies of the PEIS will be 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.

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Ms. Mills and Ms. Kramer

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The Environmental Protection Agency has been designated by the Executive Office of the President as the lead federal agency for conducting a comprehensive long-term environmental radiation surveillance program as a followup to the accident at TMI-2. The EPA is being assisted in this task by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the U.S. Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and Metropolitan Edison Company. EPA reports all results of its monitoring measurements from its baseline program three times each week to the public and to the news media.

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

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Docket 50-289
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