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AUG 28 1980

The Honorable Jim Courter
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Courter:

Your letter of July 28, 1980, to the Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission requested Assistance in answering questions from a constituent of yours. Enclosed is pertinent information, which should be helpful.

Sincerely,

(Signed) T. A. Rehm
William J. Dircks
Acting Executive Director for Operations

Enclosure:
Questions and Answers

No LATER SUBJECT CHANGES
QUESTIONS NOTED

OCA
8/28/80

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Questions and Answers

1. With all the official concern expressed over exposure to radiation from the sun, x-rays, etc., how can venting of radiation from TMI be safe?

Attached is report NUREG-0673 of May 5, 1980, entitled "Answers to Questions About Removing Krypton from the Three Mile Island, Unit 2 Reactor Building," from the TMI Program Office of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This was prepared prior to the venting of krypton from TMI. The actual operations have been successfully and safely completed. The amount of krypton vented to the atmosphere is estimated to be about 45,000 curies, which is appreciably less than the figure of 57,000 curies estimated in the report.

2. What are the long-term effects of exposure to low-level radiation, and, if they are not known, why is the public being exposed? (The "supposed" study of long term effects seem to hold up everything else such as beneficial disease preventatives or medications.)

Attached is an interview with Dr. Arthur C. Upton, Director of the National Cancer Institute, on "Low-Level Radiation" published in the Cancer Journal for Clinicians, September/October 1979. Dr. Upton says in part: "Because we know radiation can do harm, and because we have no confidence in the existence of a threshold, we must do everything possible to minimize the unnecessary radiation exposure of patients. I think we have developed enough information over the last 75 years to make it unlikely that we will underestimate the risks involved. In any case, we must be as certain as possible that the benefits of exposure outweigh any presumed risks."

3. Is it true that after approximately 30 years of operation nuclear power plants must be closed and sealed for over 200 years because of the accumulation of intense levels of radiation? Isn't this rather dangerous littering on a grand scale?

When a nuclear power plant has completed its service life, it may be dismantled immediately or it may be put in safe storage and dismantlement deferred until radioactivity has decreased significantly. Upon completion of dismantlement, it is assumed that the property will be released for unrestricted use. Both methods are discussed in the attached Summary of report NUREG/CR-0130, Vol. 1, on "Technology, Safety and Costs of Decommissioning a Reference Pressurized Water Reactor Power Station" from Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory, June 1978.

4. Where can nuclear waste be "safely" stored? (When by present technology it can only be contained safely for 10-20 years and is active for up to one million years?)

Attached is a message of February 12, 1980, to the Congress from President Carter, stating that he is establishing a comprehensive radioactive waste management program. He says that the capability now exists to characterize and evaluate a number of geologic environments for use as repositories built with conventional mining technology.

5. Why should I as a taxpayer have my hard-earned money be fed back to the nuclear power industry which I so strongly oppose?

The NRC was created by the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, as amended, to license and regulate nuclear power as a "safe and reliable" alternative and not to promote nuclear power.

6. Is it true that due to the Price-Anderson Act of 1957, the nuclear industry is not liable for accidents and damages incurred?

No. Licensees of commercial nuclear power plants having a rated capacity of 100,000 electrical kilowatts or more are required to provide proof to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that they have financial protection in an amount equal to the maximum amount of liability insurance available at reasonable cost and on reasonable terms from private sources. This amount is currently \$160,000,000. In addition, for each such plant a licensee provides \$5,000,000 to a liability fund that totals \$350,000,000 at present. By law, the Government provides the remaining indemnity of \$50,000,000 to reach the limit of \$560,000,000.

7. If a meltdown had occurred at TMI, and if I had survived but had been forced to evacuate my home, would anyone reimburse me for my losses?

Yes. Following the advisory by the Governor of Pennsylvania that pregnant women and pre-school age children living within a five mile radius of the Three Mile Island plant should leave the area, American Nuclear Insurers established a claims office to pay claims for living expenses for these people, as well as others who had special medical problems. The emergency claims center began operation on March 31, 1979, the third day after the accident, and made payments on that day of almost \$12,000. The payments increased daily until they reached a peak of about \$167,000 on April 9, 1979. As of June 1980, cumulative payments for evacuation expenses and lost wages made to approximately 12,000 individuals were in excess of \$1,500,000.

8. Isn't it true that a nuclear reactor at Indian Point in New York is built directly on a faultline in direct opposition to safety laws? If this is true, why hasn't this reactor been shut down when it threatens such a large population mass?

During the review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission of the application for an operating license for Indian Point Unit 3, faulting was discovered in the plant site area. The NRC staff visited the site and inspected the fault exposures. Further investigations concluded that this faulting is geologically old and poses no hazard to the plant. Because of the complexity of the geologic structure in the region of the Indian Point site, additional investigations were undertaken, particularly of the Ramapo fault that extends from northern New Jersey to northeast of Ladentown. At that point the fault branches into a wide zone of less well defined faults. The Mont Farm Road fault trends toward Indian Point, but whether it crosses the Hudson River is not known.

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, after evidentiary hearings on various geologic and seismic issues related to Indian Point, made a finding on October 12, 1977, that the Ramapo fault is not a capable fault. NRC regulations define a "capable fault" as a fault which has exhibited one or more of the following characteristics: (1) movement at or near the ground surface at least once within the past 35,000 years or movement of a recurring nature within the past 500,000 years; (2) macroseismicity instrumentally determined with records of sufficient precision to demonstrate a direct relationship with the fault; (3) a structural relationship to a capable fault according to characteristics (1) or (2) such that movement on one could be reasonably expected to be accompanied by movement on the other. The Commission has not yet decided whether it will review the decision of the Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board on this and other seismic issues relating to Indian Point.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering what special measures should be taken for nuclear power plants in areas of high population density to reduce the probability of a severe reactor accident and to lessen the consequences of such an accident by reducing the amount of radioactive releases or delaying such releases in order to provide additional time for evacuation. Interim measures have already been ordered for the nuclear power plants at the Indian Point and Zion sites.

Attachments:

1. NUREG-0673
2. Interview with Dr. Upton
Director, National Cancer
Institute
3. NUREG/CR-0130
4. Message of 2/12/80 to Congress
from The President

Answers to Questions About Removing Krypton from the Three Mile Island, Unit 2 Reactor Building

TMI Program Office

Office of
Nuclear Reactor Regulation

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory
Commission



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**TECHNOLOGY, SAFETY AND COSTS OF
DECOMMISSIONING A REFERENCE
PRESSURIZED WATER REACTOR
POWER STATION**

R. I. Smith G. J. Konzek
W. E. Kennedy, Jr.

EXCERPT

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Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory
Battelle Boulevard
Richland, WA 99352

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