

OCT 10 1980

Ms. Sandra MacNair  
638 Eastside Drive  
Landisville, Pennsylvania 17538

Dear Ms. MacNair:

Your letter to Commissioner Hendrie about information made available to the public regarding the accident at Three Mile Island and about the public's involvement in the licensing of nuclear reactors was 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. In the meantime, the NRC maintains a full-time staff available to the public either in the Downtown Mall, 100 Brown Street, Middletown, Pennsylvania, or at the Three Mile Island site. NRC may be reached at either location on (717) 782-4014. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also maintains an office in the Downtown Mall in Middletown open to the public. EPA representatives can be reached at (717) 782-3904 or 782-4866.

With regard to the potential health effects of the accident, a team of investigators from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare calculated the doses to the people living within 50 miles of the Three Mile Island site and estimated the number of new cancers that would result from the exposure to the radioactivity that leaked out of the plant. The team reported their work in a report entitled, "Population Dose and Health Impact of the Accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station" (NUREG-0558). They concluded that the offsite collective dose associated with radioactive material released from March 28, 1979, to April 7, 1979, represents minimal risks (that is, a very small number of additional health effects to the offsite population). Enclosed for your information is the summary of NUREG-0558.

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Regarding your concern that citizens should be involved in the licensing of nuclear power reactors, I am enclosing information on the reactor licensing process that explains the procedures involved in licensing a nuclear plant, including opportunities for citizen participation. Also as far as citizen participation is concerned, the President's Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island did include members of the public.

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,

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

- Enclosures: 1. Summary of NUREG-0558  
2. Information on licensing

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