

OCT 10 1980

Mr. D. Lamar Root
RD #7
Manheim, Pennsylvania 17545

Dear Mr. Root:

Your letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission about the effects of the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear station was referred to me for response.

The enclosed press release from the Pennsylvania Department of Health discusses infant mortality in the state. You will see that the fetal death rate actually dropped after the accident at TMI.

With respect to alternative methods of energy production, such as solar, wind, and geothermal, the Department of Energy is the federal agency responsible for their research and development. NRC considers these alternative methods of energy production in its assessment of the environmental impact of each nuclear power plant as part of the agency's overall review of each utility's application for a construction permit or an operating license. To date, we have determined that alternative methods of energy production are neither technically nor economically feasible to provide the required amount of power at the time it is needed.

With regard to your comments concerning 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 that are appropriate to assure the public health and safety will also be addressed. In addition, the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board has indicated that NRC should consider the psychological impact of future operation on the nearby communities. A copy of the Commission Order that outlines the issues to be considered is also enclosed for your information.

As for 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 shut down, was suspended by Order of July 20, 1979.

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Mr. D. Lamar Root

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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. Press release
2. Order and Notice of Hearing
of August 9, 1979

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Docket 50-289
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Woliu

OFFICE	TMI/TF <i>md</i>	TMI/TF <i>DB</i>	TMI PO			
SURNAME	Woliu:bmf	DBrinkman	BSnyder			
DATE	9/11/80	9/11/80				