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OCT 10 1980

Mr. John A. Howell III  
655 Verbenia Drive  
Satellite Beach, Florida 32937

Dear Mr. Howell:

Your letter to President Carter about the accident 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.

The President's Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island conducted an extensive investigation and concluded that the fundamental cause of the accident was "operator error." They did not find that sabotage was involved. Therefore, there is no need to involve the Justice Department as you suggest.

Enclosed for your information is a copy of the NRC Notice of Violation, which lists the items of noncompliance for which civil penalties were levied against Metropolitan Edison Company.

With regard to the human errors that have been identified as contributing to the accident at Three Mile Island, steps have been taken to address procedure changes necessary to assist the operator on both a short- and long-term basis. Immediate changes were required at all Babcock and Wilcox facilities prior to their restart after the Commission ordered them shut down. Also, the Lessons Learned and the Bulletins and Orders Task Forces have recommended design and operating requirements implemented in the near future on all facilities in operation or under construction. Longer term modifications for all facilities are presently under consideration by the Lessons Learned Task Force.

The human errors experienced at Three Mile Island stemmed in part from the incorrect interpretation of reactor coolant system instrumentation. Operator training had not previously addressed the system and operator response to the set of conditions experienced during the March 28, 1979, transient. As a result, all licensed operators at Babcock and Wilcox facilities received special training and a written examination on the transient. Additionally, these operators attended training sessions on the Babcock and Wilcox simulator to reinforce the operator response required during similar transient situations. All training

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Mr. John A. Howell III

- 2 -

OCT 10 1980

was completed before operators could resume their duties during power operations. Long-term commitments on operator training and licensing are being developed by NRC's Operating Licensing Branch.

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

Enclosure: NRC Notice of Violation

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