

TERA

OCT 20 1980

Ms. Janet Lowry
225 Albion Place
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

Dear Ms. Lowry:

Your letter to President Carter opposing the release of krypton-85 from the Three Mile Island nuclear station was referred to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission 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 us from responding to you as promptly as we would have liked.

Metropolitan Edison Company submitted to NRC a "Safety Analysis and Environmental Report" (November 13, 1979) in which it evaluated alternative methods for the disposal of the krypton gases, such as purging, cryogenic processing, and selective absorption. NRC also evaluated alternative methods for disposal of the krypton gas to determine what effect decontamination would have on workers, on public health and safety, and on the environment. Based on its evaluation, NRC issued an environmental assessment (NUREG-0662 and two addenda) for public comment on March 26, 1980, and received approximately 800 comments. These comments were considered in the staff's preparation of the "Final Environmental Assessment for Decontamination of the Three Mile Island Unit 2 Reactor Building Atmosphere" (NUREG-0662), vols. 1 and 2, copies of which are enclosed for your information.

From this process have emerged the following NRC staff conclusions:

- The potential physical health impact on the public of using any of the proposed strategies for removing the krypton-85 is negligible.
- The potential psychological impact is likely to grow the longer it takes to reach a decision, get started, and complete the process.
- The purging method is the quickest and the safest for the workers on Three Mile Island to accomplish.
- Overall, no significant environmental impact would result from use of any of the alternatives discussed in the assessment.

On June 12, 1980, the Commission issued an Order for Temporary Modification of License, authorizing controlled purging of the krypton-85 from the reactor building atmosphere. In a separate Memorandum and Order, also issued on June

OFFICE ▶					
SURNAME ▶					
DATE ▶					

8011060237

H

OCT 20 1980

Ms. Janet Lowry

- 2 -

12, 1980, the Commission discussed rationale for its decision. Actual purging operations began on June 28, 1980, and were completed on July 11, 1980. The doses resulting from the purge were well within those predicted in section 7.1 of volume 1 of NRC's final environmental assessment. Copies of both Commission issuances are also enclosed.

Your letter urges that an independent committee, rather than the NRC, oversee cleanup operations at TMI. The licensee has the primary responsibility to physically carry out decontamination operations. The NRC was created by Congress to regulate the commercial use of nuclear energy. Under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, NRC has the authority to revoke licenses, take possession of special nuclear material (uranium fuel), and license other organizations if necessary. NRC can, in an extreme case, operate a nuclear facility if it deems such operation necessary to protect the public health and safety. Should Metropolitan Edison be unable to carry out decontamination operations adequately, a number of options are possible, including NRC's licensing another organization to run the facility or NRC's operating the facility itself. Presently, 12 Commission professional representatives are at the TMI site. Their task is to review all proposed cleanup plans, including the review and approval of detailed operating procedures, and to maintain surveillance of those operations that NRC has authorized. No future actions can be taken at the site without the NRC's review and approval.

I am pleased to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,

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

- Enclosures: 1. NUREG-0662, vols. 1 & 2
- 2. Order for Temporary Modification of License of June 12, 1980
- 3. Memorandum and Order of June 12, 1980

DISTRIBUTION

Docket 50-289	BSnyder	HBerkow/WRussell	MDuncan
PDR	JCollins	RDeYoung	
LPDR	DBrinkman	DRoss	
TERA	Woliu	RMattson	
NRR r/f	HRDenton	DEisenhut	
TMI PO r/f	EGCase	SCavanaugh (NRR #3720)	
TMI Site r/f			

OFFICE >	TMI TF <i>und</i>	TMI TF <i>RAB</i>	TMI PO"		
SURNAME >	Woliu:bmf	DBrinkman	BSnyder		
DATE >	9/30/80	10/2/80	10/3		