

TERA

SEP 29 1980

Dr. Alan S. Peterson  
243 Shultz Road  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603

Dear Dr. Peterson:

Your letter to President Carter suggesting that the federal government take charge of cleanup operations at the Three Mile Island nuclear station and urging the facility's permanent shutdown 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 licensee (Metropolitan Edison) 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.

Under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, NRC has the statutory authority to ensure that the public health and safety will be protected should Metropolitan Edison Company be unable to carry out its responsibilities as a licensee. At present, however, the resources necessary for NRC to implement its direct involvement in Metropolitan Edison's activities are not authorized. Nevertheless, existing statutes do give NRC the final authority to decide who assumes responsibility for a facility when a licensee cannot continue its operation.

NRC has prepared a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for public comment on the decontamination and disposal of radioactive wastes resulting from the accident at Three Mile Island Unit 2. The PEIS, a copy of which is enclosed for your information, focuses on the environmental issues and alternative methods associated with the performance of these cleanup activities.

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With regard to your desire for a permanent shutdown of TMI, the Commission has ordered that a public hearing be conducted to determine whether TMI-1 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.

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

- Enclosures: 1. PEIS  
2. Order and Notice of Hearing of August 9, 1979

DISTRIBUTION

Docket 50-289	BSnyder
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LDR	DBrinkman
TERA	Woliu
NRR r/f	OLynch
TMI PO r/f	
TMI Site r/f	

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NRC

Alan S. Peterson M.D.  
243 Shultz Road  
Lancaster, Penna., 17603  
March 26, 1980

President Jimmy Carter  
White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

I am a family physician in Lancaster, Pa. (twenty three miles from Three Mile Island). Our drinking water arises from the Susquehanna River a few miles below TMI.

I think I am speaking for the majority of the area residents when I say that we have no trust in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. We are awaiting someone in government to say the cleanup of TMI is too big a job for Metropolitan Edison and the NRC - that the federal government MUST step in with funds and experts needed to finish the job as quickly and as safely as possible. (I understand that atomic submarines are very safe. Why not send in a Navy team.)

We are also waiting for someone in government to say that TMI will never open again as a nuclear plant. We want to resume our lives without ever having to worry again about closed valves, confused operators, radiation leaks, hydrogen bubbles and overheated nuclear cores.

I really feel that the NRC is not doing the job it should and not representing AT ALL the people of the area. I do not feel that you have done (as several studies have suggested) enough to end this problem. The NRC is still fumbling. I wish you would follow the Kemeny report. If you want ANY votes from Central Pennsylvania in the upcoming election the ONE MOST IMPORTANT THING you can do is get the government involved financially in the cleanup

and get the NRC and Met Ed. out for good. Your recent changes in the NRC do not go far enough.

Thank you for listening. I hope and pray you are.

Yours truly,

*Alan S. Peterson, M.D.*

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