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Ms. Mary Osborn  
4951 Highland Street  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17111

Dear Ms. Osborn:

Your letter about the release of krypton-85 from the Three Mile Island nuclear station and about the effects of radiation on food was referred to me for response.

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 and 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 the 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 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.

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Ms. Mary Osborn

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You asked for the name of someone at Pennsylvania State University who could inform you of the safety of your garden food. I suggest you contact Mr. Thomas Gerusky of Pennsylvania's Bureau of Radiation Protection for information about your garden produce.

Regarding your concern over strontium-90 getting into the food chain, I am enclosing a copy of the "Staff Review of Radioecological Assessment of the Wyhl Nuclear Power Plant," Summary (NUREG-0668). This report discusses the soil-to-plant transfer of strontium.

As you requested, you have been added to our mailing list for notice of public meetings and reports related to TMI.

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. NUREG-0662, vols. 1 & 2
  2. Order for Temporary Modification of License of June 12, 1980
  3. Memorandum and Order of June 12, 1980
  4. Summary of NUREG-0668.

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