

Docket No. 50-320

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
110 FOW 6 P 1 P 59

Miss Marion Schuh
46 Walnut Street
Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013

Dear Miss Schuh:

I am writing in response to your letter of March 22, 1980, expressing your concerns for the health and safety of the people in the vicinity of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station.

A team of investigators from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare calculated the doses to the people living within 50 miles of the Three Mile Island site and estimated the number of new cancers that would result from the exposure to the radioactivity that leaked out of the plant. The team reported their work in a report entitled, "Population Dose and Health Impact of the Accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station" (NUREG-0558). They concluded that the offsite collective dose associated with radioactive material released from March 28, 1979 to April 7, 1979 represents minimal risks (that is, a very small number of additional health effects to the offsite population). Enclosed for your information is the summary of NUREG-0558.

Although it is generally agreed that epidemiologic studies of the resident population of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, could not detect any excess morbidity or mortality due to radiation exposure from the accident at the Three Mile Island facility, the Center for Disease Control and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (with assistance from the NRC) have conducted a census of the population residing within five miles of Three Mile Island for the purpose of providing an adequate registry for potential future studies of health effects. The Department of Health of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also is planning to update the population registry every five years over the next three decades. In addition, the Health Department and several Pennsylvania universities are planning or already are conducting studies of health effects including pregnancy outcome, congenital and postnatal thyroid diseases, mental health and cytogenetic abnormalities.

Although it is unlikely that these studies will be able to unravel the complex etiology of these health effects, the NRC is monitoring the studies and assisting where possible through its Radiological Health Standards Branch.

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NRC's regulations in 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, specify the general design criteria for nuclear power plants. These general design criteria establish minimum design, fabrication, construction, testing, and performance requirements for nuclear power plants to provide reasonable assurance that the facility can be operated without undue risk to the health and safety of the public. Criterion 2 requires that structures, systems, and components be designed to withstand the effects of natural phenomena such as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes.... Enclosed for your information is a copy of the regulation.

NRC's regulations also require nuclear power plant licensees to design safeguard systems to protect against acts of sabotage and to prevent the theft of special nuclear material both at the plant and during transit. Part 73 of the Commission's regulations, copy enclosed, describes the requirements for physical protection of plants and materials.

In addition to security plans, each licensee is required to have an NRC approved emergency plan. The NRC is amending its regulations to upgrade its requirements for emergency planning around nuclear facilities. Enclosed is a press release which describes major changes in the regulations.

The goal of the U.S. Nuclear Waste Management Program is to provide assurance that existing and future nuclear waste from military and civilian activities, including spent fuel from the once-through nuclear power cycle, can be isolated from the biosphere so as to pose no significant threat to public health and safety and the environment. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is responsible for providing the framework of criteria and regulations that will ensure that the disposal methods developed for all types of radioactive waste are consistent with the achievement of this goal of safe, long-term waste disposal.

The NRC's authority to license and regulate the storage and disposal of radioactive wastes is derived from three statutes: the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. To implement this authority and to provide guidance to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the industry, and the public, the NRC is developing new or revised regulations for such storage and disposal. These regulations will require conformance with a fixed set of minimally acceptable performance standards for waste management activities while providing for flexibility in the technological approach.

The DOE responsibilities concerning radioactive waste disposal are limited to high-level wastes, and only those low-level wastes produced as part of DOE's programs. Their responsibility does not include commercially generated low-level wastes.

Miss Marion Schuh

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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,

Bernard J. Snyder, Program Director
TMI Program Office
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosures:

1. NUREG-0558 Summary
2. 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A
3. 10 CFR Part 73
4. Press Release

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SURNAME	MDuncan/prf	DBrinkman	BJSnyder		
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