

50-16/341



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

March 7, 1994

Sister Dorothy McDaniel, IHM
President of the Congregation
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
610 West Elm Avenue
Monroe, Michigan 46161

Dear Sister Dorothy McDaniel:

I am responding to the letter you sent to Chairman Selin on February 16, 1994, regarding a planned discharge of slightly radioactive water from the Fermi 2 nuclear plant in Newport, Michigan, to Lake Erie. You indicated your concern regarding the level of radioactivity in the water and its potential long-term health effects on the citizens of Monroe, Michigan, because the release point was three miles from the Monroe water intake.

You requested that the NRC delay the release of the radioactive water, previously scheduled for February 17, 1994, until assurances can be provided to local residents that adverse long-term health effects will not result from the discharge of this water, that the exact amount of the radioactive content be released to the public and verified as accurate by an independent agency, that the cause for the December 25, 1993, turbine failure and the licensee's recovery plans be made public, and that the Fermi safety precautions be upgraded and its emergency plan be made available to the public.

You also asked that my staff proceed with studies to document the health risks associated with long-term exposure to ingestion of low levels of radioactivity and that these studies be made public.

The discharge of water from Fermi 2 to Lake Erie was delayed by agreement between the licensee and local officials until a public meeting could be held to answer questions and concerns related to the discharge. This meeting was held on February 23, 1994, in Monroe, Michigan. My staff contacted you by telephone and informed you of the meeting. Several members of the NRC Region III and headquarters staffs were in attendance at the February 23, 1994, meeting. These included Mr. William Axelson, Director, Division of Radiation Safety and Safeguards (DRSS), Region III; Mr. Steven Orth, DRSS, Region III; Mr. Roland Lickus, Region III State Liaison Officer; Mr. Jan Strasma, Region III Senior Public Affairs Officer; and Mr. Charles Willis, NRC headquarters DRSS representative. Their function was to assist in providing information to address public questions concerning the proposed discharge.

Additionally, the staff confirmed by independent measurement preceding the discharge that the radioactivity levels were well below the regulatory limits for release. The results compared favorably with independent measurements taken by the licensee and the Michigan Department of Radiological Health. The staff also monitored the actual discharge at the release point and local intake point (city of Monroe water intake) to verify that the levels remained within regulatory limits. These measures verified that the releases did not pose a risk to the public health and safety or to the environment. We plan to

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Sister Dorothy McDaniel

perform NRC confirmatory analysis of a representative sample of significant future discharges related to the December 25, 1993, incident. The NRC sampling plan was reviewed with city and county officials who were in agreement.

Information regarding specific radionuclides and their measurements was made available at the meeting. The specific root cause of the accident is still under investigation and not yet available; nor is a complete assessment of the damage. Therefore, the licensee's plans for recovery and corrective actions have not yet been formulated. My staff is following the licensee's activities in this area and will evaluate the root cause and proposed corrective actions.

In the February 7, 1994, Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) report documenting the investigation of the December 25, 1993, turbine failure, the staff concluded that plant personnel, including management, effectively responded to the event by assuring safe reactor shutdown and suppression and control of the fire in the turbine-generator system. If subsequent followup investigation indicates that performance or equipment upgrades are necessary, my staff will evaluate these corrective actions. Both the February 7, 1994, AIT report and the licensee's emergency plan are available in the local public document room at the Monroe County Library System, 3700 South Custer Road, Monroe, Michigan 48161.

You urged the agency to move forward with studies documenting the health risks associated with long-term exposure to low levels of radiation. I can tell you that the NRC relies on the BEIR (biological effects of ionizing radiation) V report dated January 1990 as an accepted national standard for determining the effects of long-term exposure to low levels of radiation and a basis for determining regulatory discharge limits. The predicted exposures to the public from radioactive discharges at the regulatory limits would be a very small fraction of the average equivalent exposure to members of the public from naturally occurring background radiation (documented in the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements Report No. 94, "Exposure of the Population in the United States and Canada from Natural Background Radiation"). The radioactivity levels for the proposed discharge at Fermi are well below the regulatory limits.

Additional information regarding the health effects associated with living in proximity to nuclear facilities is contained in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Report, "Cancer in Population Living Near Nuclear Facilities," dated July 1990. All of these documents are publicly available.

I trust that this reply responds to your request. If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely, *original signed by*
William T. Russell
William T. Russell, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

*See previous concurrence

OFFICE	PM:PD31:DRPW	LA:PD31:DRPW	D:PD31:DRPW	*TECH EDITOR	
NAME	TColburn:gtt	CJamerson	LBMars	RSanders	
DATE	3/3/94	3/3/94	03/3/94	02/23/94	
OFFICE	*ADR3:DRPW	*D:DRSS:RIII	*D/DRPW	*(A)ADP	*D/NRR
NAME	JZwolinski	WAxelson	JRoe	LReyes	Murley
DATE	02/24/94	02/24/94	02/25/94	02/25/94	02/28/94

EDO
JMTaylor
03/7/94

Congressional Correspondence and Green Tickets

Docket File 50-341 (w/incoming)

NRC & Local PDRs (w/incoming)

EDO #0009790

EDO Reading

H. Thompson

J. Blaha

T. Murley/F. Miraglia

J. Milhoan

J. Martin, RIII

R. Bangart, SP

PD31 Rdg. File (w/incoming)

JRoe

JZwolinski

LBMarsh

OGC

OPA

OCA

NRR Mail Room (EDO#0009790 w/incoming) (12/G/18)

N. Olson

B. Jones

T. Gibbons

T. Colburn (w/incoming)

C. Jamerson

L. Miller, RIII

ACTION

EDO Principal Correspondence Control

FROM: DUE: 03/07/94 EDO CONTROL: 0009790
DOC DT: 02/16/94
FINAL REPLY:

Dorothy McDaniel
Sisters, Servants of The Immaculate Heart
of Mary

TO:

Chairman Selin

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

** GRN **

CRC NO: 94-0149

Murley

DESC:

ROUTING:

RELEASE OF WATER INTO LAKE ERIE BT DETROIT EDISON
FROM FERMI 2

Taylor
Milhoan
Thompson
Blaha
JMartin, RIII
Bangart, SP

DATE: 02/22/94

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

NRR

Murley

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

DATE RECEIVED: February 22, 1994
NRR ACTION: DRPW:ROE
NRR ROUTING: TEM/FJM
WR
ADPR
DC
FG
MAIL ROOM

ACTION
DUE TO NRR DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
BY Bar. 2, '94

