



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555
AUG 17 1979

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to NRC
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50-320*

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Mr. Jon Berland
24 E. Victoria
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Mr. Berland:

Your recent letter to Chairman Hendrie concerning the accident at Three Mile Island Nuclear Station Unit 2 expressing your views on nuclear power was referred to this agency for response. We 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 the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station, but also at all nuclear power plants.

We have taken or are taking a number of actions with respect to all nuclear power plants as a result of the Three Mile Island accident. Specifically, full-time inspectors have been assigned to each operating plant utilizing Babcock & Wilcox pressurized water reactors like those at Three Mile Island. In addition, the licensees of all these plants which were not already shut down have voluntarily shut down their plants. We are issuing confirmatory orders to the licensees of all Babcock & Wilcox reactors like those at Three Mile Island to assure that necessary plant modifications, additional training and revised operating procedures will be effected prior to resuming operation.

Licensees of all operating plants utilizing pressurized water reactors have been instructed to take specific actions with regard to the status of certain equipment, plant procedures, operator actions and facility designs. Licensees of all operating plants, including those utilizing boiling water reactors, have been instructed to provide us with additional information with regard to their facilities in light of the Three Mile Island accident. In addition, substantial effort is being expended within this agency to evaluate the factors which contributed to the Three Mile Island accident and to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

We will carefully review all the information obtained and developed as a result of the Three Mile Island accident and take whatever further action is deemed appropriate.

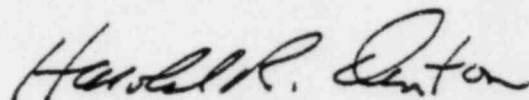
With respect to alternative methods of energy production such as solar, wind and geothermal, the Department of Energy is the Federal Agency responsible for their research and development. Our consideration of alternative methods of energy production is limited to the assessment of the environmental impact of each nuclear power plant as part of our overall review of each utility's application for a construction permit or an operating license. To date, we have determined that alternative methods of energy production such as solar, wind and geothermal are neither technically nor economically feasible to provide the required amount of power at the time it is needed.

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With respect to waste disposal, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was given regulatory authority over the storage and disposal of all commercially-generated radioactive wastes upon its creation in 1974 by the Energy Reorganization Act. To implement this authority and to provide guidance to the Department of Energy, the industry and the public, we are developing new or revised regulatory standards and guidelines for such storage and disposal. These standards and guidelines will require conformance with a fixed set of minimum acceptable performance standards (technical, social and environmental) for waste management activities while providing for flexibility in technological approach. These standards and guidelines will be designed to assure public health and safety and protection of the environment.

In addition, the Department of Energy has been pursuing a program designed to accommodate the anticipated need for disposal of high-level waste or spent fuel that is expected to accumulate as the nuclear power industry continues to grow. This program includes, among other things, plans to develop several operations for disposal of high-level wastes in stable geological formations. The purpose of these facilities would be to demonstrate the acceptability of a specific geological formation for permanent disposal of high-level and transuranic wastes. These facilities would be treated as permanent disposal repositories. The Department of Energy is now awaiting a Presidential direction of policy and plans which will occur following completion of studies recommended by an interagency task force formed by the President. There are several methods of high-level waste disposal which are technologically feasible. The Department of Energy is expected to continue to investigate options to determine whether superior disposal alternatives can be developed.

Sincerely,



Harold R. Denton, Director
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

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