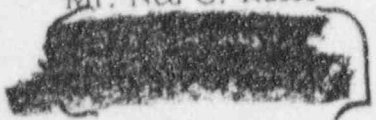




UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
475 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406

FEB 13 1991

Mr. Ned G. Russo



Dear Mr. Russo:

This responds to your letter dated November 29, 1990, to Senator Arlen Specter in which you expressed your concerns regarding evaporation of TMI-2 accident generated water (AGW).

The NRC, contrary to your assertion, believes that a substantial amount of public information has been made available concerning the health and environmental effects of AGW evaporation at TMI. In addition, we believe the public has had ample opportunity to participate in our review process concerning this matter. Outlined below is a summary of the major NRC activities which occurred over the last four years on this issue.

The NRC began an environmental impact review of the proposed evaporation in July of 1986. In December of 1986, the NRC staff published a draft environmental impact statement, NUREG-0683, Supplement 2, which dealt with the disposal of AGW. The final report of this environmental impact statement was published in June of 1987. Both documents were made available to the public free of charge.

The AGW evaporation process was then subjected to the NRC staff technical review process. Further, a notice for opportunity of public hearing was published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on July 31, 1987. Following a period of discovery and pre-hearing motions, a public hearing was held in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in November 1988. This hearing also received a great deal of attention in both the electronic and print media.

In February 1989, the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB), in its order, approved TMI-2 AGW evaporation. This was based on the board's detailed and unanimous finding that AGW evaporation is environmentally acceptable and can be conducted without endangering the health and safety of the public. This recommendation was appealed to and affirmed by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Appeal Board; this hearing was open to the public. The NRC Commissioners approved the AGW evaporation in April 1989 and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources issued a permit to allow AGW evaporation in August 1989. At the conclusion of the process described above, the NRC published a safety evaluation, addressing the disposal of the accident generated water, on September 11, 1989.

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Following the TMI-2 accident, a TMI-2 Advisory Panel was established to publicly discuss engineering, environmental, and safety issues. For each meeting, the NRC has issued a press release and has listed a meeting notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER to solicit public involvement. There have been 19 TMI-2 Advisory Panel meetings since October 1986, several of which discussed AGW evaporation. The most recent meeting was held January 15, 1991, at the Holiday Inn in downtown Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

The Columbia University study that you mentioned in your letter researched the possible increase in cancer rate due to the TMI-2 accident, and concluded that there is no relation between radiation vented during the TMI-2 accident and cancer rates among children living nearby. This study did not pertain to the evaporation of accident generated water. However, the Commonwealth and the NRC reviewed this document to ensure that no new information had been uncovered that could directly change the conclusions documented in NUREG 0683, Supplement 2. Neither the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania nor the NRC found any reason to require the utility to change the AGW evaporation process.

The review process for the disposal of TMI-2 AGW has taken more than four years to complete and includes an environmental evaluation, a safety evaluation, and frequent TMI-2 Advisory Panel meetings. All documents were and continue to be available to the public and all hearings were open to the public. Further, the NRC staff is aware of the actions taken by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and by the utility, General Public Utilities, to keep the public apprised of the evaporation plan.

I hope that we have been responsive to your concerns. If you have further questions, please feel free to call the NRC Region I office at (215) 337-5000.

Sincerely,



Thomas T. Martin
Regional Administrator

cc: Senator Arlen Specter