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Three Mile Island Resources

Title: Three Mile Island Alert: Island Updates (December 1979)

Date: 1979

Location: TMI-TMIA

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Three Mile Island Alert

Island Updates

News Watch on the Harrisburg Area

Vol. 1 No.1

December 1979

Statement of Purpose

The initial incident of what is known as "the accident at Three Mile Island" may have occurred a long time ago -- March 28, 1979, to be exact -- but the accident and its repercussions continue to affect daily life in the area surrounding the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant. While "the whole world is watching Harrisburg," national and international media coverage of the on-going accident is scanty at best. The purpose of this newsletter, ISLAND UPDATES is to bring the rest of the news about the accident to national and international activist and media groups.

In the months to come, we will cover the accident, the clean-up, the removal of wastes, the mental and physical health impact of the accident, the economic repercussions. We will keep you informed on the various hearings which are scheduled to investigate Metropolitan Edison's ability to operate a nuclear power plant, to consider whether the undamaged TMI Unit 1 should be allowed to reopen, and whether or not Unit 1 should remain in the rate base. (See "TMIA Intervenes" for a list of specific contentions being filed in the intervention hearings.) We will also keep you informed of those Three Mile Island Alert (TMIA) actions which may be of national or international interest.

In the process of getting the news out, we hope that we will destroy some myths about our so-called return to normalcy following the accident. The Harrisburg area has no more returned to normal than the plant at TMI has entered cold shut down. Both are myths.

In the role of myth breakers, we invite you to send questions (not political statements) to this newsletter and we will attempt to find answers.

There is power in information. As long as the nuclear power industry continues, we must not allow any cover-up of the news which may have grave implications for life on this planet.

This newsletter was made possible by a grant from The Youth Project. They have our sincere appreciation for their support.

NRC Told Measuring Gauges 'All Went Off Scale,' 'We'll Never Know' N-Dose

Washington Post News Service

WASHINGTON — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission was told Thursday that it will never know how much radiation escaped from the plant at Three Mile Island because the levels exceeded the abilities of the plant instruments to measure them.

"All the radiation monitors in the vent stack where as much as 80 percent of the radiation escaped went off scale the morning of the accident," the NRC's Albert Gibson told the five NRC commissioners Thursday. "The trouble with these monitors is they were never contemplated for use in monitoring accidents like Three Mile Island."

"So we don't really know what went up there?" NRC Commissioner Victor Gilinsky asked. "Up through the vent stack?"

"That's correct," replied Gibson.

Gibson told the five commissioners that radiation readings inside the auxiliary building were "extremely high" at all three levels inside the building, forcing an evacuation of the building the morning of the accident.

"The radiation monitors were all off scale," Gibson said. "One set of readings were greater than 1,000 rems per hour. We don't know how much greater because the licensee didn't have instruments that measured more than 1,000."

The maximum allowable exposure the NRC allows nuclear plant workers is five rems per year, less than 1 percent of the hourly radiation concentrations being found inside the auxiliary building the morning of the accident.

There are three radiation monitors in the vent stack, Gibson said, and another five monitors in the pathways leading to the stack. All eight instruments read the highest radiation levels they could read during the accident, which released airborne radiation for three straight days starting March 28.

Gibson said that an average of 30 measurements were made on Three Mile Island and within a three-mile radius of Three Mile Island each day that radiation was released, often when the wind was shifting or when escaping radiation was not at its peak.

On the day of the accident,

365 millirems of beta and gamma rays per hour were measured at ground level 1,000 feet from the vent stack. Directly over the vent stack, a helicopter measured levels three times that. Both those measurements triggered emergency announcements, leading Pennsylvania Gov. Richard Thornburgh to advise pregnant women and pre-school children in a five-mile radius of the plant to stay indoors.

"Those measurements were very inconclusive," Gibson told the NRC. "All they will show will be dose rates at the moments the measurements were made and without knowing the precise weather patterns we don't know if they were made at the appropriate locations."

Gibson said that most of the radiation that escaped through the vent stack escaped through open relief valves and leaking pipes and valves. Until Thursday, the NRC had thought most of the escaped radiation was gas that had bubbled out of contaminated water on the floor of the auxiliary building alongside the reactor.

Staff This Issue

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Donna Mark Bartlett

Mary Osborn John Sislo

Alison Brown

Nancy Larson

Water cleanup at TMI approved

By Susan Q. Stranahan
Inquirer Staff Writer

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) yesterday authorized the decontamination of 250,000 gallons of radioactive water from the Three Mile Island nuclear plant.

At a hastily convened meeting in Washington, the five commissioners unanimously ordered the cleanup to begin "promptly." The decontaminated water is to be returned to storage tanks at the plant until the NRC decides what to do with it.

The process could begin in several days — unless it is held up by court challenges. At least one group said it would immediately seek a temporary restraining order, and many observ-

ers believe the decontamination issue will be the first to reach the courts since the March 28 accident at the plant 10 miles south of Harrisburg.

In their order, the commissioners also provided that during the next 20 days, any individual "whose interest may be affected" by the decision can request a hearing on the matter. But the decontamination process would go on even while such hearings were conducted.

An official of Metropolitan Edison Co., operator of the plant, warned yesterday before the NRC decision that unless the decontamination process began soon, storage space for the radioactive water would be filled

by early November. The system that cools the damaged reactor has a leak that has filled all but 23,000 gallons of the storage capacity, Robert Arnold said.

Approximately 1 million gallons of radioactive water are being stored at the plant, but the NRC's order involves only water now in the auxiliary building.

The NRC was expected to act on the decontamination proposal at a meeting Oct. 10, but it postponed a decision after a two-hour, closed session to consider the "legal aspects" of such a decision.

The decontamination process approved by the NRC is known as EPICOR II, which involves filtering the water through resin beads to remove most of the radioactive particles. The EPICOR II equipment already has been installed at the plant, at a cost of about \$1.8 million.

The system had the backing of Harold Denton, head of NRC's office of nuclear reactor regulation, as well as Metropolitan Edison Co.

However, the NRC staff was not unanimous in its support of the process. William J. Dircks, head of the office of nuclear material safety and safeguards, earlier warned the commissioners that disposal of the saturated resin beads could pose a serious safety problem because of the threat of leaks of extremely radioactive water remaining in the resins.

As part of its order yesterday, NRC required that the resin beads be solidified prior to being placed in containers for shipment to a nuclear waste burial site. However, no solidification facilities exist at the plant.

The NRC order allowed nonsolidified resins to be shipped offsite only if necessary for the continued operation of EPICOR II or "to protect the public health and safety."

The Susquehanna Valley Alliance, which says the EPICOR II process is the first step toward ultimate disposal of the treated water into the Susquehanna River, plans to seek a temporary restraining order in federal court to block the start of the decontamination operation, according to an attorney for the environmental group.

The NRC's decision to authorize EPICOR II, and not to resolve the ultimate cleanup question, was "designed to avoid the obvious need to do a complete, cohesive and comprehensive environmental impact statement," the group contended.

TMI Firm Cites Threat Of Radioactive Leaks

HARRISBURG (AP) — Three Mile Island officials said yesterday that unless they are allowed to slowly vent radioactive gases, seals in their reactor building could conceivably deteriorate and cause uncontrolled releases.

The officials told Gov. Thornburgh during an open briefing that such releases are extremely unlikely, but even the remote danger spotlights the need to get rid of the krypton 85 gas.

"We see that risk, governor, as being rather nominal," said Robert Arnold, chief of the recovery operation at the damaged nuclear power plant.

But Metropolitan Edison Co., operator of the plant, is anxious to vent the gases into the atmosphere over a three-month period early next year and is awaiting federal approval.

Arnold said that while the reactor building is now kept at negative pressure to prevent leaks, various seals around access doors and hatches are subject to aging.

Arnold said a gradual controlled venting would subject any particular individual to a dose of no more than a tenth of a millirem of gamma radiation and five millirems of the far less harmful beta radiation.

He said such doses would be a fraction of maximum federal standards for routine releases, and would be equivalent to watching television for a comparable period of time.

The krypton gas is a byproduct of nuclear fission and escaped from the plant's reactor into the two million cubic feet of air in the reactor building following an accident last March.

If separated from the air, there would be only about one or two cubic feet of krypton 85. But that volume still amounts to 44,000 curies of radioactive material, enough to be considered dangerous if released suddenly or in concentrated form.

Unlike some other radioactive gases, krypton 85 cannot be filtered from air.

Arnold said there is no immediate danger of the seals leaking. Even if they did, building pressures could be adjusted so there would be no releases.

But he said there is concern about letting the gas remain for a long period. He noted krypton has a half-life of more than 10 years, meaning it takes that long for half of it to disappear.

"I think the likelihood of them (the seals) deteriorating over the next two-year period is not as small as we'd like it to be," he said following the briefing.

Thornburgh asked Arnold if there were alternatives to the krypton venting.

Arnold said the gas could be collected, compressed and stored on site or shipped elsewhere. But that process would require two or three years of construction and would only mean the gas had been moved from one place to another.

Thornburgh asked what is now considered the worst possible accident that could still occur at Three Mile Island.

"One where we would lose all electrical energy at the site (combined with) an unattended situation at the site," said Arnold.

Survey: 144,000 Fled

By JOHN SCOTZIN
Staff Writer

Perceiving danger, confusion or a fear of forced evacuation, some 144,000 persons living near the area of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station evacuated for an average of five days after the March 28 nuclear accident.

Including lost pay and other expenses, the total cost of the evacuation was at least \$18 million — an average of \$100 per household — according to preliminary findings from the first detailed socio-economic survey undertaken on the TMI incident by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"Questions will be raised with release of this information as to what the state is doing about it," wrote Dr. Walter Plosila, director of the governor's Office of State Planning and Development, in a letter accompanying the survey report to Gov. Dick Thornburgh and Lt. Gov. William W. Scranton III.

"As you know, because NRC classified this as a Class 9 incident, civil court actions will be required for recovery," added Plosila, under whose office auspices the telephone survey of more than 1,500 households was conducted between July 23 and Aug. 6, through full funding by the NRC.

Approximately 29 percent of the households with evacuees within five miles were reported to have been reimbursed by insurance for their costs, as of the date of the survey.

In all, 4,585 persons were questioned in terms of TMI behavior and attitude. The survey was done by Chilton Research of Philadelphia for Mountain West Research Inc., which in October was awarded a contract by NRC to study the social and economic consequences of sitting, constructing and operating 14 nuclear power stations at 13 sites, including TMI.

Most persons responding to the 110-question, 32-minute interview felt that the central Pennsylvania area's economy has been adversely impacted and a continuing concern over TMI emission was evidenced. Most in the TMI area said their living styles have returned to normal, but 20 percent have considered moving.

While evacuation near the plant site was extensive, the survey found that a substantial minority in the five-mile radius — 40 percent — did not leave. Those who did traveled an average of 100 miles to 21 states, with most staying with friends and relatives from one to 62 days.

Surprisingly, the report noted, those persons living closest to TMI traveled shorter distances than those living farther away.

Besides personal financial costs, lifestyles were disrupted, many experienced psychological stress and more than a fifth disagreed on the decision to evacuate.

Ninety percent said their life has not been changed by TMI.

Respondents were narrowly divided on their attitude toward nuclear power generation since the TMI accident. Thirty-seven percent of all households interviewed felt the disadvantages of nuclear power outweigh the advantages; 32 percent felt the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

In evaluating the credibility of the information made public during the accident, the NRC (27 percent) and Thornburgh (21 percent) got the best marks for "extremely useful" information; Metropolitan Edison Co., the plant operator, got the worst (2 percent). Met-Ed received a 60 percent rating for "totally useless" information.

Development of the survey "instrument" began March 30, two days after the accident. The report said a wide range of expertise aided in preparing the final document, among them academic specialists in the areas of risk and hazard assessment and disaster research; federal agencies, especially the Civil Preparedness Agency; Pennsylvania state agencies, especially the Office of State Planning and Development; other local researchers studying the accident; and the NRC's technical review staff.

"Once the inputs from these sources were considered, the survey was designed to address a variety of related issues," the report said. "First, it was important that the behavior of people in the area near Three Mile Island be described accu-

ately. In particular, the survey provides an estimate of the extent of the evacuation.

"Second, it estimates the costs of the accident to households in the area. Other techniques are available for estimating many of these costs — employment records and tax records, for instance — but many of the out-of-pocket expenses of individuals are difficult to estimate using these techniques. "Third, it addresses the social and psychological effects of the accident. Included among these are how stressed, upset, and threatened people in the area felt and how their normal activities were disrupted.

"Fourth, it describes how persons in the area evaluated the information they received during this time period and what notification procedures were used during the emergency.

"Fifth, it assesses the attitudes of persons in the area towards the TMI nuclear station, nuclear power in general, and the area in which they live. In many cases, these attitudes are assessed for different points in time."

Other major findings of the survey:

Behavior/Evacuation

— Identified as critical to the decision to evacuate were: 30 percent, the hydrogen bubble; 19 percent, conflicting reports; 14 percent, both Thornburgh's advisory to pregnant women and pre-school children in a five-mile radius to leave and the fear of a forced evacuation.

— Forty-one percent of all households surveyed contained at least one evacuee and 39 percent of all persons in these households evacuated. In more than 90 percent of these, the evacuation was total.

— Within a five-mile radius, 66 percent of all households contained at least one evacuee.

— Some 43,000 persons in the five-mile radius evacuated, 70,000 in the 5-10 mile radius (36 percent) and 31,000 persons in the 10-15 mile radius (34 percent) for a total of 144,000 evacuees.

— The majority of those evacuating did so on March 30 (two days after the accident), depending on the mile-ring distance. Surprisingly, a significant portion of the popula-

Survey

(from page 4)

tion left before March 30 — 18 percent in the 0-5-mile radius, 11 percent in 5-10 miles, and 13 percent in 10-15 miles.

— April 4 was the median date of return, indicating an average five-day evacuation period.

— The youngest and the oldest were gone longer than those in the 40-60 age bracket. Pregnant women were most likely to be gone the longest.

— Seventy-two percent of all evacuees remained in Pennsylvania with an additional 16 percent going to immediately adjacent states. Some evacuees went as far away as Florida, California, and Oklahoma.

— Major reasons given for evacuation included (in a multiple choice response): dangerous situation, 91 percent; confusing information, 83 percent; to protect children, 61 percent; to avoid confusion of forced evacuation, 76 percent.

— More females evacuated than males; two-thirds of the children under five evacuated; and 71 percent of the pregnant women evacuated.

Economic Impacts/Psychological Effects

— Thirty-six percent of the evacuees lost income due to the incident or 34,000 persons; the median lost amount was \$100; 11 percent reported losses of more than \$500.

— Twelve percent of all households surveyed felt TMI was no threat at all during the two-week emergency period.

— Nearly 20 percent of the households surveyed said there was intrafamily disagreement over the decision to evacuate.

— Among households that evacuated, 12 percent reported continuing economic effects; 4 percent not evacuating reported the same.

— Only 3 percent have considered changing jobs as a result of the accident and half of those, 1.5 percent, have taken steps in this direction.

— Twenty-two percent perceive TMI to be a continuing threat to their families; 28 percent feel it is no threat.

— However, 41 percent were concerned about new TMI emissions as opposed to 25 percent who were not, indicating possibly that as long as the plant is shut down the public perception is less severe.

— Only 12 percent were concerned about TMI before the accident.

Non-evacuees said their primary reasons for staying were that they were unable to leave their jobs and would have left only had they received an evacuation order. Many (45 percent) felt that "whatever happened was in God's hands," and fully a third were concerned about looters.

Ninety-eight percent of respondents in households with pregnant women or children under six were aware of the governor's recommendation that they leave the area. Most heard it between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., or virtually as soon as it was given.

Two-thirds said they were told where they could expect to be evacuated, but only a fourth said they were told who would be responsible for conducting the evacuation.

When asked, "Overall, how satisfied were you with the way you were given information during the emergency?" half of all respondents were very satisfied (12 percent) or mostly satisfied (37 percent), and half were very dissatisfied (22 percent) or mostly dissatisfied (29 percent). Generally, those farther from TMI were reported more likely to be satisfied with the information they received than were those closest to TMI.

"Those who were most likely to be dissatisfied were pregnant women (71 percent) and students (75 percent)," the report said. "There was a marked difference in overall satisfaction with information by evacuation status. Evacuees were much more likely to be dissatisfied (64 vs. 47 percent) than were those who did not evacuate."

Concerning information sources, the report added: "During the two-week period of the accident, the governor of Pennsylvania and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were cited as the most helpful. Respondents perceived Metropolitan Edison as least helpful, with over half the sample saying it was totally useless."

Although not mentioned in the report, Harold R. Denton, the top NRC aide sent to the scene by President Jimmy Carter to oversee the cooling down operations, was widely complimented for his calm, cool behavior with the press, patiently answering thousands of questions.

Panel Shapes Health Studies Of TMI Crisis

By The Associated Press

A panel of medical experts Tuesday met to develop several long-term studies to measure the health effects of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident.

"The results will be of great value to the country and the world, not to say Pennsylvania itself," according to Health Secretary Gordon MacLeod, who heads the blue-ribbon panel.

The studies are expected to focus on pregnancy outcomes, radiation doses, mental health, drug and alcohol use, chromosome damage and long-term disease surveillance among those living up to 50 miles from the nuclear plant.

The most intensive studies will be done within a five-mile radius. A limited advance census will be conducted Wednesday and Thursday in Middletown, with the full-scale operation to start next week.

The full census will entail 30- to 60-minute interviews of about 45,000 people living within five miles of Three Mile Island. The \$300,000, eight-week project will employ 200 data collectors supervised by experts from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta.

MacLeod said all of the short-term projects will cost about \$1 million, \$600,000 of which has already been committed by sources outside the state Health Department.

Pregnancy Study

Pregnant women and their offspring are also being studied for latent health effects. In a study conducted at the Hershey Medical Center under the sponsorship of the Penn. State Health Dept., Drs. George Tokuhata and Ronald Chez will be studying all women who live within ten miles of the plant who have become pregnant, given birth or terminated a pregnancy since March 28, 1979. Data will be collected through March 27, 1981.

Six at TMI receive dose of radiation

By The Associated Press

Six workers at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant suffered radiation exposure while repairing a leaking valve at the facility, according to a spokesman for Metropolitan Edison Co.

The workers, who were wearing protective clothing and breathing equipment, were exposed Tuesday night while repairing the valve in the fuel-handling building between the Unit 1 and Unit 2 reactor containment buildings, said Sandy Polon of Met-Ed, which operates the plant.

The plant has been closed since March 28, when the nation's worst commercial nuclear accident occurred at the plant.

"There are overexposures, but overexposures in a range where we

do not expect any immediate symptoms of illness," said Carl Abraham of the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission office in King of Prussia.

"The longest time they were in there was three to five minutes; that was by design. They knew if they stayed in longer they would get excessive radiation, but even though, they still got more than was planned," Abraham said Wednesday.

"Keep in mind, they were entering the area to do a necessary job. The valve packing was leaking (contaminated water) and it was getting into the ventilation system," Abraham said, adding that the repair was successfully completed.

NRC and Met-Ed officials met Wednesday night to review the exposure readings, and the utility will

submit a full report later, Abraham said.

The workers, five from Met-Ed and one outside contract employee, were not identified. "It's not our policy to identify individuals unless they require hospitalization — for their benefit as well as ours," Polon said.

The workers received a maximum body dose of about one rem of radiation, compared to federal exposure limits of three rems per three-month period. "So that wasn't in excess of our limits," said Abraham.

The workers suffered skin exposure of about 50 rems, compared to federal limits of 7.5 rems per three-month period, and feet exposures of 40 to 150 rems, compared to federal limits of 18 1/4 rems per quarter.

The Bulletin

Friday, Nov. 23, 1979

Met Ed fights TMI shutdown move

Harrisburg (UPI) — The Three Mile Island power company, arguing it should be permitted to operate again, has claimed that revocation of its state license would be tantamount to confiscation of \$1 billion in capital provided by its investors.

Metropolitan Edison Co., operator of Three Mile Island, on Wednesday challenged the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's claim that the panel has the right to take its state operating permit.

The PUC ordered the company on Nov. 1 to show cause why the Three Mile Island permit should not be revoked, questioning the company's financial stability and ability to provide safe, reasonably priced electricity to its customers.

In its reply to the PUC order, Met-Ed said revocation of the permit would be "prejudicial to the interests of Met-Ed's customers, without justification in fact, contrary to law, arbitrary and capricious and confiscatory of the rights and property of investors who have supplied more

than \$1 billion of capital."

Met-Ed said the PUC, in its actions, held much of the power over whether Met-Ed could continue to be viable financially. It argued it should be permitted to have rate increases to meet its money demands.

Met-Ed said its credit rating was crucial to financing the continuing cleanup operations at Three Mile Island.

Met-Ed said there was no express provision in the Public Utility Code for the revocation of permits, and insisted the PUC did not supply appropriate facts to support revocation based on law.

In conclusion, Met-Ed said, it would not be in the public interest to revoke its license.

3 More Get Radiation Dose

By The Associated Press

Plant operators at Three Mile Island said Friday that three more workers were exposed to small amounts of radiation while working in a fuel-handling building.

They were among several workers who recently have received similar small doses of radiation at the crippled nuclear power plant, including six who were exposed earlier this week.

They have not been identified.

In the most recent incident, three contractor employees working on recovery operations at the plant had contaminated material on their knees, washed it off and returned to work, the plant said in a prepared statement.

TMIA Intervenes

By order dated July 21, 1979, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission ordered the closing of the undamaged reactor at TMI Unit 1. On August 9, 1979, the NRC issued another order designating an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board to hold hearings concerning the reopening of the plant. TMIA has intervened in these proceedings on the following grounds:

- 1) The effect that the reopening of Unit 1 will have on the physical health of the population located near the plant.
- 2) The effect of additional radioactive discharges on the water quality of the Susquehanna River.
- 3) The effect that reopening will have on the psychological health of area residents. That this will adversely affect the economy because employees will be absent from work due to mental anxiety and people will leave the area and their jobs and new businesses will refuse to locate in the area.
- 4) The inability of local and state officials to deal with civil unrest that may occur if the Unit is reopened. Additionally, disruptions cannot be dealt with by the licensee (Metropolitan Edison) without danger to Unit 2, which will remain contaminated for many years.
- 5) The inability of Metropolitan Edison to safely operate the Unit.
- 6) That Metropolitan Edison and General Public Utilities do not have the financial capabilities to operate a nuclear facility.
- 7) The inability of Metropolitan Edison, the NRC, and the state to deal with a serious accident at Unit 1 while Unit 2 remains contaminated.
- 8) That an environmental impact statement must be filed prior to the reopening of Unit 1.

On September 21, 1979, the NRC ruled on the initial petitions to intervene. Neither the staff (NRC) or the licensee (Met-Ed) opposed TMIA's intervention. Also accepted were petitions from Newberry Township, P7NE, Union of Concerned Scientists, A.N.G.R.Y. (York), Chesapeake Energy Alliance, Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power, and Stephen Sholly (a Mechanicsburg, Penn., resident).

Class 9' Step Dim at Unit 1 Hearings

Patriot, Harrisburg, Pa., Friday, Oct. 26, 1979

By RICHARD ROBERTS
Staff Writer

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff probably will attempt to exclude general evidence about the possibility of Class 9 accidents during hearings on the proposed reactivation of the undamaged Unit 1 reactor at Three Mile Island.

James A. Tourtellotte, chief NRC counsel for cases involving Three Mile Island, said the staff probably will take the same position it has taken in the past — to oppose general discussion of Class 9 accidents on the grounds that the chances of such events are too remote to consider.

The staff will take that position despite its admission that the March 28 accident at Three Mile Island was, in fact, a Class 9 accident.

In an Aug. 24 response to a question posed by an NRC administrative law panel considering the licensing of Public Service Electric and Gas Co.'s Salem Nuclear Generating Station in New Jersey, the NRC staff said: "The occurrence at Three Mile Island was a Class 9 accident."

The response was written by Roger J. Mattson, director of the NRC's TMI-2 Lessons Learned Task Force.

Class 9 accidents involve a series of successive plant failures "more severe" than those for which plant safeguards are designed. Until the

NRC made its decision on the Three Mile Island accident, Class 9 accidents universally have been excluded from consideration in plant license reviews.

The final decision on whether general discussion of Class 9 accidents will be allowed in the Unit 1 restart hearings will be made by the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board.

Strong Fears Expressed On TMI Perils

By **RICHARD ROBERTS**
Staff Writer

A Lower Swatara Twp. resident Friday told a U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission administrative law panel that allowing the undamaged Unit 1 reactor at Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station to reopen would be akin to reopening half of a dynamite factory while the other half is ablaze.

Johnson addressed his remarks to the three-member NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board at the Hershey Little Theater in Derry Twp. during the second day of special prehearing sessions devoted to "limited appearance statements" by the public.

"We are dealing with life and death — nothing could be more concise than that," said William Johnson. "The radioactivity in the (Unit 2 reactor) containment building at the present time is enough to kill us all if it would be allowed to escape."

The licensing board will convene hearings next year to consider whether the reactor should be reactivated. Unit 1 was shut down for refueling at the time of the March 28 accident at Three Mile Island, and the NRC subsequently ordered Metropolitan Edison Co. to keep the reactor closed indefinitely.

Nancy Marter, a former Middletown resident, vowed to "do everything within my power" to prevent the Unit 1 reactor from operating again. She said her family fled Middletown because of the accident and subsequently have been unable to sell their borough home.

"No one in Middletown can feel safe in their homes," she said. "If you can't feel safe in your home, then what do you have?"

A Lower Allen Twp. resident, John Murdoch, questioned the financial ability of Metropolitan Edison Co. to operate Unit 1 "adequately and safely" and whether, in light

of the utility's financial constraints, "safety will be the primary concern."

Paula Kinney of Middletown said the nuclear accident made her "feel as though I was raped, I was robbed and I was beaten — and nobody cares."

"I RESENT Met-Ed taking away my innocence," she said. "I don't trust anyone any more. I'm a changed person."

Middletown resident Kari Light told the board that the fate of the Unit 1 reactor is a personal issue, not a technical or academic one.

"People are sensitized to things that I don't think you can comprehend," she said. "You've really put people in a rotten position as far as being human beings."

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