

THREE MILE ISLAND

ALERT

November
1986

315 Peffer Street; Harrisburg, PA 17102

TELEPHONE: 717-233-3072

Low-Level Waste Plans Draw Questions - More than 75 area residents turned out to hear the Department of Environmental Resources's plans for the siting and operation of a low-level radioactive waste dump to be located in Pennsylvania. The Nov. 17 meeting in Harrisburg was the first of a half-dozen such meetings planned to be held around the state to dispell public fears and misconceptions, but it raised more questions than it answered. The panel, made up of DER officials, for the most part was defensive, long-winded, confused and, at times, hostile.

Will residents of the host community be able to purchase property or health insurance? Who will monitor the site after the initial 30-year period expires? What type of monitoring systems will be on-site, where will they be placed, who will operate them and what will they monitor for? What if the NRC reclassifies low-level waste to include some of what is now considered high-level waste; will the site be obligated to take it? Is there any coordination between states, counties, and municipalities during the transportation of the wastes? What criteria will be used to establish poor character? Who will operate the site if the site operator becomes insolvent?

TMIA members need to continue to pressure the DER, the Governor, and other elected officials for answers to these and other questions relating to the "proposed" low-level waste site. Call the Bureau of Radiation Protection at (717)787-2163 with your questions.

TMIA has more information available about low-level radioactive wastes. These include a series of fact sheets:

- o A "Low-Level" Nuclear Waste Primer
- o "Low Level" Nuclear Wastes: Options for Storage
- o Radioactive Waste: Buried Forever?
- a profile of commercial radioactive landfills
- o Shipping Casks: Are They Safe?

Please telephone Eric Epstein or Kay Pickering at the TMIA office (233-7897) if you are interested in this issue and would be willing to serve on a TMIA committee addressing this subject.

by Eric Epstein

TMIA Has Holiday Gifts for Sale - What could be a better gift to family and friends across the country, or even for local folks, than TMIA gifts? TMIA is stocking the Syracuse Cultural Workers "1987 Peace Calendar, Carry It On," a beautiful calendar available for \$7.50. Marked down for the holidays are the "Shut TMI" tee-shirts. Available in yellow and blue, the shirts are available in medium, large and extra-large at \$5.00 each. As usual, there's a variety of buttons available at a variety of prices. Call the office or stop by.



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THREE MILE ISLAND ALERT
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No Environmental Impact Statement Filed on Shipments of TMI's Melted Fuel - Surprisingly, in an era when government agencies require the filing of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) on all types of projects, none has been required to justify the 2,300 mile route TMI's melted fuel follows through ten states and major metropolitan areas.

A total of 40 shipments are planned from TMI through Pittsburgh; Canton, Ohio; Indianapolis and Terra Haute, Indiana; St. Louis; Kansas City; Topeka; and towns in Colorado and Nebraska on its way to Idaho Falls. While we're delighted to see the stuff moved out of central Pennsylvania, no one has ever written an EIS to justify the populated route chosen, possibly in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Dr. Fred Millar of the Environmental Policy Institute said of the Department of Energy's policy on the moving of the entire TMI core (made up of highly dangerous material) more than 2,000 miles: it is like wanting to study the moon and, instead of bringing back moon rocks, bringing back the entire moon.

EPA Will Cease Monitoring Once Damaged Fuel is Off Island - The Environmental Protection Agency is currently the lead federal agency for monitoring radiation in the environment around Three Mile Island. According to an EPA plan titled "Long-Term Environmental Radiation Surveillance Plan," the agency will be leaving and phasing out some monitoring programs while turning others over to the state Department of Environmental Resources, once the damaged Unit 2 fuel is removed from the Island.

Being transferred to DER are the 13-station Reuter-Stokes "Sentri" system (which when coupled with the 16-station GPU monitoring system which prints-out at the Dauphin County Emergency Management center provides a total of 29 gamma radiation detectors which were not in place at the time of the accident), water monitoring gamma radiation monitors at the TMI Industrial Water Outflow, and water monitoring at the TMI Water Treatment Plant intake.

Monitoring programs being terminated include 33 long-term dosimeters (TLD's or Thermoluminescent Dosimeters); the constant volume air samplers which measure radioactive particulates; the high-volume air samplers (though it is possible these may be transferred to DER); the tritium air samplers; sampling of Lancaster's water supply; and the sampling of well water along the river.

Depending on whether the tritium contaminated water being used in the cleanup process is on-site after all fuel has been removed, the DER may, at its option, continue the tritium air sampling and will determine, with the City of Lancaster, whether to continue sampling of the City's water supply.

Mary Osborn and Cherie Friedrich reviewed the EPA's report at the request of EPA TMI Field Station Director Dr. William Kirk and made recommendations on behalf of TMIA. Their basic recommendations were that **all** current monitoring programs be transferred to DER. Osborn and Friedrich also identified some potential problem areas with the plan.

by Cherie Friedrich

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, THEN GIVE MORE TO SUPPORT TMIA ACTIVITIES

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Intervention Fund Contribution: \$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 \$MORE (Checks in the amount of \$50 or more can be made payable to the TMI Legal Fund for tax deduction purposes.)

Membership: \$15 Regular Membership \$50 Sustaining Member
 \$25 Non-Profit Organization \$100 Patron
 \$5 Low income, Student \$200 Club Member
 \$5 Non-member, newsletter subscription

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO TMIA, 315 Peffer St., Hbg. PA 17102

Conference on the Risks of Radiation Held in Philadelphia - The Clean Air Council of the Delaware Valley sponsored a two-day conference on the health risks of radiation on November 14-15. TMIA President Vera Stuchinski and Sandra Choma of the Radiation Monitoring Committee attended, below is their report.

ASSELSTEIN SAYS PUBLIC CAN IMPACT NRC

On Friday evening, November 14, we arrived at the Friends Meeting House in Philadelphia in time to hear the conference's keynote address delivered by NRC Commissioner James K. Asselstine. Although the Clean Air Council Radiation Program Director, Richard Myers' introduction of Comm. Asselstine brought bad news, his appointment expires summer 1987, Asselstine's speech aroused the whole audience.

Asselstine started his address by comparing the Chernobyl and TMI accidents. During Chernobyl 100 million curies of radiation were released while during TMI an estimated 2.5 million curies were released. He also stated that although American reactors have containment structures (unlike Chernobyl) the containment strength varies and cannot necessarily assure containment. One style of containment structure lacking sufficient strength is the Mark I (a type of containment which is used in PA) and there are studies in process on the Mark I. A reactor safety study performed by the NRC stated that 25% of the 100 operating plants would be unable to contain a core meltdown.

Commissioner Asselstine said he feels there is an NRC reluctance for stricter guidelines for nuclear power plants. He also stated that human attitude and performance do contribute to the operation of a nuclear power plant.

The "backfit rule" prevents the NRC from imposing new safety regulations for existing plants. There also exists a defensive attitude of the power plant owners after a plant design has been approved and during construction the NRC decides there are safety changes needed. When this situation arises, the power plant owners then insist on the NRC to justify to them what the safety change is required. The burden is then on the NRC to justify, rather than on the power plant owners to comply.

There is also a problem when the NRC staff attempts to take on additional duties, such as trying to guess what the NRC wants to hear instead of just providing the facts. He also said the "consideration of off-site safety" law is not being followed by the NRC, and that Congress could mandate the NRC to follow the law.

He had a three-part plan which he explained to us which consisted of: a thorough review of all individual plants to look for design deficiencies that could cause or aggravate an accident; improvement program in areas of weakness, human, management, and equipment; and new design features for existing plants.

Those are only a few topics he covered and then he had a question and answer period for two hours. He seems to do a lot of job-related travel and we truly doubt that he'll be able to accomplish his plan prior to his term expiration. He was asked if he intends to continue with the NRC or in the nuclear field and he wouldn't provide a definite answer (the first time all evening) but he said he hopes to remain in the nuclear field.

He did suggest the way to change the direction of the NRC is through citizen and local elected officials writing to the NRC and through our voting selections for federal administrations.

On Saturday morning, toxicologist Bruce Molholt, Ph.D., instructed the audience on different kinds of ionizing radiation and how they affect the cells and DNA, causing cancer, birth defects and mutations.

Dr. Ernest Sternglass, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, did studies which showed in spite of medical and technical advances which should

have caused a steady decline in infant mortality rates, infant mortality rates sharply increased over the period of above-ground nuclear bomb testing from 1940 to 1960. The mortality rate declined after 1960 and then increased after TMI started, had a sharp drop after TMI shut down and then high peaks when Berwick came on-line and after the restart of TMI Unit 1. The study on up-state New York showed high increases in infant mortality during operation of TMI and during venting. He also found that after the 1979 TMI accident, hundreds of infant deaths occurred which were not listed in Pennsylvania and Maryland statistics until recently.

His studies revealed that infants and fetus immune systems are weakened and are more affected by radiation exposure compared to adults.

Dr. Robert L. Brent, Director of the Stein Research Center at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, spoke of his study which showed that 35% of all pregnancies are at risk for miscarriage, genetic mutation or birth defects. However, the risk of the above three conditions as a result of radiation exposure is very small compared to non-radiation exposed pregnancy complications. He felt the TMI exposure during the accident were on the average of one to two millirads - negligible amounts.

Bev Davis of TMIA gave a speech on the perspectives of Harrisburg-area residents during and after the TMI Unit 2 accident. She described how she felt when fleeing the area and information she tried to obtain during the following week from "officials." She described the learning process she's been through in order to prepare herself for numerous hearings and to question the officials. She recalled how radiation monitors were not in place at the time of the accident and how the monitors which were in place reached their maximum readings. However, officials have attempted to assure area residents that any exposure was very low or even minute. She also spoke of the Aamodt's Health Study and how the state and federal governments try to explain away and justify all health effects that do show up.

Diane D'Arrigo of the Nuclear Information Research Services spoke of what lobbying is still required and Dr. Judith Johnsrud, Co-Director of the Environmental Coalition on Nuclear Power, discussed the process now underway to locate a low-level nuclear waste site in Pennsylvania. She urged everyone to attend the public meetings scheduled throughout the state, noting that the site selection will be made by bidders, not by elected officials.

The conference was a valuable learning experience even to the point of being sobering. We highly recommend for anyone who has the opportunity to hear any of the speakers to do yourself a favor and see them. They were all exceptional.

by Sandra Choma & Vera Stuchinski

Seabrook and Perry Still Cliff-Hangers - Although the Seabrook plant and the Perry plant both have licenses from the NRC, there will be no early start-up because evacuation issues have not been resolved and there will be court proceedings before the reactors costs are transferred to ratepayers. Perry, the plant on the shore of Lake Erie about 35 miles east of Cleveland which is partly owned by PP&L, was found to be unneeded and too expensive by a consultant hired by the Pennsylvania Consumer Advocate's office. It was found the plant would operate at a loss of \$6 billion during its lifetime.

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- Dec. 8 - 7:30PM** - TMIA Planning Council at the TMIA Office, 315 Pepper Street
- Dec. 10 - 7:00PM** - Advisory Panel to the NRC meets at the Holiday Inn Town, 2nd & Chestnut, Harrisburg. Topic - Post Defueling Plant Status - TMI Unit 2
- Dec. 13 - 1:00PM** - The 27th annual Christmas Peace Pilgrimage, a ten-mile walk from Nazareth to Bethlehem, PA open to all who seek peace. For more information contact Kay Pickering at the TMIA office or call Joseph Osborn (215)866-3127
- Jan. 21 - 7:30PM** - TMIA Membership Meeting - Program - NRC staff will present their Environmental Impact Statement on the GPU water disposal alternatives. 6:30 PM pot-luck supper, Harrisburg Friends Meeting House, 6th & Herr Streets, 7:30 PM program begins.