

# THREE MILE ISLAND

# ALERT

JUNE  
JULY  
1989

315 Peffer Street; Harrisburg, PA 17102

TELEPHONE: 717-233-3072

## Evaporation OK Appealed to Federal Court

Three Mile Island Alert and the Susquehanna Valley Alliance appealed to federal court the NRC decision to allow GPU Nuclear to evaporate radioactive water left from the 1979 accident. Intervenor Frances Skolnick, representing TMIA and SVA, says in granting its approval of the evaporation plan the NRC violated provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, and the Atomic Energy Act.

According to Skolnick, using the evaporation method to dispose of the radioactive water would set a precedent for the disposal of liquid radioactive waste. The water contains over 1000 curies of tritium and quantities of alpha, gamma and beta emitting radioisotopes including cesium, strontium, carbon 14 and plutonium. Central Pennsylvania's population will suffer exposure to ionizing radiation which causes cancer, leukemia, genetic defects and other health effects.

Individuals and organizations in Central Pennsylvania and around the world have expressed concerns about the NRC's unanimous vote in favor of evaporation. Elected officials and DER staff have received post cards, letters and phone calls from central Pennsylvania residents. It is important to continue that dialogue so the Department of Environmental Resources (Bureau of Air Quality)

### We Get Letters

Dear folks,

President Bush just said, "Every American should have clean air" in his speech about clean air/environment on the TV news.

What about Our clean air? And their wanting to put all that radiated water in our air deliberately? It will fall on our water we drink, on our lands and gardens, our food, our children out playing, etc. How can they do that to us?

Please, don't let them.

I'm a grandma, I'm seventy years old, I'm worried, for us all!

Mrs. Bertha Smith

### They Get Letters

Commissioners:

The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board approval of further releases of radioactive material is unconscionable. We suggest you change the name of this Board to: Atomic Promotion and Cost-Cutting Board. It certainly is not acting on behalf of safety and public health. The international health community is appalled.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rosalie Bertell, Ph.D., G.N.S.H.  
President,  
Interantional Institute of Concern  
for Public Health,  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

A RED X INDICATES  
YOUR DUES PAYMENT  
IS REQUESTED

Three Mile Island Alert  
315 Peffer Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17102



OPEN  
IMMEDIATELY

refuses to declare the source of radioactive contamination to be of "minor significance; denies the evaporation permit to GPU; and holds well-publicized and informative public hearings on the evaporation issue prior to making a decision. Please write DER Secretary Arthur Davis (PO Box 2063, Harrisburg, 17120), state legislators (care of the PA House or PA Senate, Harrisburg, 17120) and call the Governor's Action Line (1-800-932-0784) to voice your opinion that DER should not issue the air quality permit GPU needs to begin the evaporation process.

In addition to the judicial review, safe energy advocates still have one opportunity in the regulatory arena to block the evaporation, a hearing with the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board on July 26, 1989 at 2:00 p.m. in the NRC's Public Hearing Room, 5th Floor, East-West Towers, 4350 East-West Highway, Bethesda, Maryland. Call the TMIA office if you can attend and want to carpool (233-7897).

**Peach Bottom Rated One of the Worst Nuclear Reactors in U.S.**

In a study released by Public Citizen, TMIA and 20 safe-energy groups, Peach Bottom was rated one of the six worst operating nuclear power plants. Called "Nuclear Lemons: An Assessment of America's Worst Commercial Reactors," the study was based on documents obtained from the government and nuclear industry.

Ken Bossong, director of Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project noted that "while certain plants are clearly the worst, this report should not be interpreted to imply that other plants are safe." Bossong added that the rankings do not include special problems like poor designs, flawed containment systems, and inadequate emergency evacuation plans.

The six worst reactors in the U.S., in order of ranking: Turkey Point-3, Florida City, Florida; Oyster Creek-1, Forked River, New Jersey (owned and operated by GPU); Peach Bottom-3 and Peach Bottom-2, Peach Bottom, PA; Fermi-2, Newport, Michigan; and Rancho Seco, Sacramento, California (see related story page 3).

**Judge Rambo Quashes Effort to Obtain Health Data**

U.S. District Judge Sylvia H. Rambo says the U.S. Department of Energy will not be required to turn over its data on workers at its nuclear facilities to the TMI Public Health Fund. Records on the health, mortality, occupational and exposure records on about 300,000 workers at the Energy Department's nuclear facilities were sought by the health fund which felt it could provide the most authoritative information available on the cancer causing effects of low-level radiation. Judge Rambo issued the order June 6, saying the use of subpoenas to compel the production of documents was improper in this case.

**Nominations Sought for TMIA Leadership Positions**

Nominations are being accepted for the positions of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary of TMIA. Also, volunteers are sought for the TMIA Planning Council. Phone or mail nominations to the TMIA office during the month of July.

**Chernobyl Update:**

**Blast Likened to Nuclear Bomb:** Some scientists now say the blast at Chernobyl was an actual atomic explosion, not a steam explosion as was originally stated. An article published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in their Journal, Technology Review, said, "A runaway nuclear reaction set off a chain of events that severely damaged the reactor core and surrounding structures. This damage set the stage for a second explosion, which was much more violent than the first and almost certainly was a full-fledged nuclear explosion." Critics, however, say it wasn't like an atomic bomb in that an atomic bomb explodes thousands of times faster than the Chernobyl

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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 Members \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Sustaining Membership  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Non-Profit Organization \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Patron  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 Low Income/Student \_\_\_\_\_ \$200 Club Member  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 Non-member newsletter subscription

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reactor exploded. The author, William Sweet, a reporter for Physics Today, said that reports from the NRC and Department of Energy indicate that the reactor behaved just like a bomb, with its fuel forming a critical mass, reacting uncontrollably, melting and finally vaporizing. In that case, he added, it "would be deeply misleading to say that the plant did not blow up like an atomic bomb."

**The author said his findings undermine longtime assertions by the nuclear industry: "Ever since the first nuclear power plants were built in the 1950s, the industry has insisted they can't explode like bombs. Chernobyl casts doubt on whether that is true of all power reactors."**

**Giant Vegetation Seen:** Some of the vegetation in the contamination zone around the Chernobyl nuclear power plant is growing to giant size, according to the Soviet newspaper, Lenin's Banner. The paper reports include "giant green pines" near woods that were left withered after the plant's explosion and fire in 1986 that spewed radiation into the air. Some trees and branches are said to be abnormally formed and stamens tend to split, the newspaper said. Tree buds have turned into leaves in seasons when they should lie dormant, it said. The newspaper also said there was nothing to rumors that rodents were proliferating in the area.

**Gofman Admits Error:** John W. Gofman, chairman of the Committee for Nuclear Responsibility, said on the first anniversary of the Chernobyl, that by now the radiation community would have admitted that the cancer-consequences from exposure to ionizing radiation are far more severe than it had ever said. "My timing was off," Gofman admits in a recent letter. "So far, only one segment of the radiation community has rocked the boat. Analysts of the A-bomb evidence at the Radiation Effects Research Foundation have found the hazard to be 10-16 times higher than the risk-value widely used in the radiation community. The three radiation committees (UNSCEAR, BEIR, and ICRP) remain silent, however."

**Cesium Levels in Food Extremely High -** The Center for Biological Monitoring has found levels of Cesium 137 in imported macaroni, pasta, spices, mushrooms, nuts and tea frequently reached 10-12,000 pCi/kg (Picocuries per Kilogram). This is about 2000 times higher than the 1974 mean values of Cesium 137 in domestic food, which were less than 6 pCi/kg in all food categories, and up to 100 times greater than peak values of Cesium 137 contamination in imported foods reported that same year.

## **Nuke News Roundup**

**Rancho Seco Plant Shut by Citizens -** Rancho Seco became the first operating reactor to be shut down by the public, when 53 percent of the citizens in the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) voted on June 6 against further operation of the plant. The referendum was effective, because 3 of the 5 SMUD board members agreed to abide by the voters' decision on the publicly owned power plant with a disastrous operating record. During the reactor's lifetime, it operated at a sorry 40 percent of capacity. Problems included serious accidents in 1978 and 1985, numerous smaller breakdowns, lack of management credibility, and economic mishaps.

If decommissioning goes as planned, it will cost an estimated \$500 million—well over the original cost of building the plant. The plant would be mothballed for now, since there is no storage repository for the nuclear waste. However, the possibility still remains that the plant could be sold to a private utility. Let's hope there are no takers.

**Seabrook Begins Low-Power Operations -** Citizens mobilized to protest low-power operations at the Seabrook, New Hampshire nuclear reactor on the first weekend in June. The massive rally of 5,000 demonstrators underscored the commitment to keeping the long-stalled power plant closed (more than 3,200 have been arrested since construction began in 1976). More than 700 people were arrested for scaling the plant fences and blocking the gates to the plant. Another demonstration is planned by the Clamshell Alliance in early October.

**B&W Abandons Plans for Nuclear Waste Incinerator -** After a five year battle, Babcock and Wilcox was forced to abandon plans for a nuclear waste incinerator and super compactor in Apollo, PA. Citizens in the Kiski Valley Coalition to Save Our Children had worked to get a local clean air ordinance passed which effectively stopped the project. Governor Casey recently visited Apollo, announcing the appropriation of \$50,000 for an independent health study of area residents, who are neighbors of the existing B&W nuclear fuel fabrication plant.

**Catholic Camp Near Nuclear Plant Is Closed -** Fort Scott Camp, the oldest Roman Catholic summer camp in the country, has closed because of concerns about the Fernald, Ohio, nuclear weapons plant two miles away. The decision by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati was made in the face of predictions that enrollment would drop 50 percent this year. A private study released in May said the Fernald plant released up to six times as much radioactive uranium dust as the Government has disclosed.

**Nuclear Plant Witnesses Got Hush Money** - The Senate subcommittee on nuclear regulation learned in early May that at least two "silence-for-money" deals in which Texas nuclear plant workers who raised safety concerns were paid for agreeing not to testify at licensing hearings. Sen. John Breaux, the subcommittee chairman, said such arrangements hold frightening implications for nuclear safety. "It turns the licensing process into a sham if witnesses can be paid money to withhold their testimony," he said.

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CALENDAR-----CALENDAR-----CALENDAR-----CALENDAR-----CALENDAR

- July 16, 1989(Sunday) - **Picnic at Camp Reily** - See enclosed flyer for details. Noon until dark. Come and bring your friends.
  - July 26, 1989(Wednesday) 2PM - **Oral argument before the NRC** on the evaporation at NRC in Bethesda. See above for carpool information and details.
  - July 27, 1989(Thursday) 7PM-10PM - **TMI Advisory Panel**, Holiday Inn Town, 2nd & Chestnut Streets, Harrisburg.
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**10th Anniversary Retrospective Available - Only \$3.00**

A beautifully put together book which provides a chronology of TMI-related events over the decade since the accident is available from TMIA for \$3.00. The book, written by Joanne Doroshow, also provides information on the psychological impact of the accident, emergency planning, Chernobyl, the Price-Anderson Act, the clean-up, Unit 1 restart, and a number of other nuclear power issues.

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the TMIA booklet, "A Decade of Delay, Deceit and Danger" @ \$3.00. Please include \$1.00 postage for first copy and \$.50 postage for each additional copy. Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



**A Decade of Delay, Deceit and Danger**  
**THREE MILE ISLAND 1979-1989**

*A Retrospective*

THREE MILE ISLAND ALERT

TMIA's 10th Anniversary Retrospective Book is still available for a \$3.00 donation. 10th Anniversary Tee-Shirts and Posters are now on sale at the TMIA office (and will be available at the annual picnic) at reduced rates. The posters, valued at \$6.00, are on sale for \$4.00. The tee-shirts, originally \$10.00, are now on sale for \$8.00. Buy now and save 20%.