

THREE MILE ISLAND

ALERT

October
1990

315 Peffer Street; Harrisburg, PA 17102

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TMI, NCI Studies Give Industry Clean Bill of Health; Or Do They?

Adapted from The Nuclear Monitor

Two major studies of health effects around nuclear power installations were introduced in September and both seemingly support the nuclear industry's position that operations—both routine and non-routine—pose no danger to nearby residents.

But both studies quickly came under attack from environmentalists for methodological shortcomings and, in reading the fine print, neither study can in any way be called conclusive. Indeed, both studies are likely to add further fuel to the debate over health effects, especially cancers, caused by nuclear plants, rather than serving as definitive pronouncements.

The biggest study was clearly that of the National Institute of Health's National Cancer Institute (NCI), which for the past two years has been studying cancer deaths in 107 counties containing or near nuclear power and weapons facilities. The study, released September 19, found "no increased risk of death from cancer for people living" in those counties.

The study provided some reassurance for the nuclear industry which was hurt by the BEIR-V report, which found higher risks than previously believed for low-levels of radiation, and the study from around England's Sellafield reprocessing plant, which found high risks of leukemia for children whose fathers worked at the plant.

The Physicians for Social Responsibility said the NCI study "raises more questions than it answers" about nuclear facilities and cancers. Greenpeace called the study a "fraud." And it was the methods which raised the most questions about the study.

For example, it is generally recognized that cancer *incidence* rather than cancer mortality is a more appropriate benchmark for measuring the health effects of radiation exposure (in many cases, given the long latency periods, death could be years away). Further, the study did not differentiate for "pockets" of cancer mortality. It treated areas upwind from nuclear facilities the same as those downwind, where higher than average exposure to radiation is more likely. In addition, they didn't allow (as anyone who has ever used a five-year-old mailing list knows) for the transient nature of the American population. Anyone who moved away a week before the study wasn't included; while anyone who moved in a week before the study was given the same statistical weight as someone who lived next to a nuclear plant since birth.

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In short, environmentalists found ample reason to criticize the study while supporters, including an ad hoc advisory committee to NCI, were reduced to acknowledging that the study only pointed out several areas where further research is needed.

Another study released early in September purported to find that no excess cancers resulted from the 1979 accident at Three Mile Island. The study's authors were forced to admit that the existing data were largely inconclusive and the study was refused publication in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine precisely because of its inconclusive nature.

While the TMI study measured cancer incidence, the authors acknowledged that too little time has gone by (11 1/2 years) to measure incidence of most cancers which could be related to radiation. The study's peer reviewer, British radiation expert Colin Muirhead, was noticeably unenthusiastic about the study, noting that it lacked "statistical power," and thus unsurprisingly failed to yield conclusive results. He called for more methodologically-sound studies.

The nuclear industry is expected to use the studies—despite their dubious nature—as a call for the expansion of nuclear power. In this regard, it is noteworthy that nuclear industry associations were faxing press releases about the NCI study on the afternoon of September 14, at the same time the first NCI releases about the study were going out. This indicates the industry had prior knowledge of the study's findings—a fact that in itself causes great concern over the NCI study's objectivity. Complaints were also raised about GPU's being allowed to review the TMI study before its publication in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

The two studies may ultimately provide some valuable baseline data to which future studies can be compared. But they fall far short of reliable scientific information from which conclusions about the safety of nuclear power can be measured.

TMIA Joins Suit to Block "Below Regulatory Concern" Policy

TMIA was among 29 organizations filing suit in Washington asking the U.S. Court of Appeals to set aside the NRC's policy known as "Below Regulatory Concern," BRC. The policy allows that low-level radioactive waste be dumped into local landfills, flushed into sewer systems, incinerated, or recycled into other products without scrutiny from the nuclear agency. The NRC says the policy poses a minuscule public health risk. Pennsylvania, which has a law banning such unrestricted disposal of nuclear waste, may, like the state of Maine, become a plaintiff in the lawsuit.

TMIA Voices Concern Over BRC

by Debbie Baker

A meeting was held September 18 at King of Prussia for citizens to voice their concerns on the NRC's BRC policy. Debbie Baker attended and submitted TMIA's letter opposing the BRC policy, expressing our position that just because some nuclear waste is considered low-level doesn't necessarily mean it is not harmful. There is a general consensus in the nuclear field that there is not enough evidence regarding health risks from low-level exposure. The general attitude is since there is no proof, let's just keep on dumping.

Please renew your membership, then give more to support TMIA activities

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ ZIP _____

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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TMIA's letter noted that the NRC's proposed BRC limit would exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's standards by a factor of 25. This is an outrage. We cited data from the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and the National Academy of sciences "BEIR-V" report which concluded that 500-600 of every 100,000 Americans die due to routine exposures to background radiation.

We would like to see the NRC reverse itself, withdraw the BRC policy and act in a responsible manner. Only then will they start to adhere to their mandate of protecting the public's health and safety.

There were many groups there from Washington, Pennsylvania, New York and Maine. Many people came forth to express their concerns on the BRC policy. We can only hope the NRC listens to the thousands of people who oppose their policy.

The Monitoring Report

by Debbie Baker

The Three Mile Island Citizen's Monitoring Network (TMI-CMN) is going strong. In the last three months we have picked up numerous alarms on the two monitors closest to the plant (Goldsboro and Middletown). These spikes have lasted one minute each and were three times higher than background radiation, some were four times background.

I contacted GPU on September 28 to express my concerns regarding the spikes. They were going to look into our alarms and get back to us. It is interesting that on September 29 GPU reduced power to 50% to correct a leak in one of their condensers which has been leaking for a couple of months—a leak they said was not radioactive and which posed no threat to the public. It will be interesting to see if our alarms cease in the next couple of months.

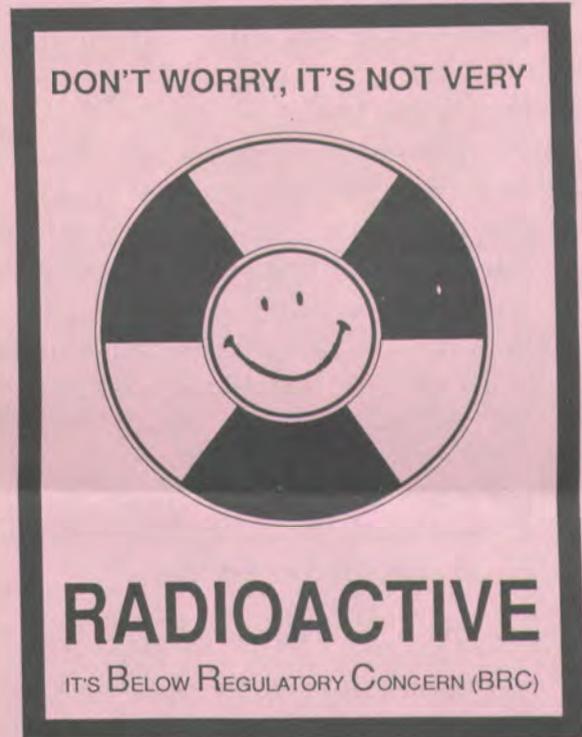
Anyone interested in joining the network may do so by contacting Debbie Baker at 566-7466. Dedicated people is what makes this network a success.

Nuclear Industry Mounting IOU's to High Level Waste Fund

The Department of Energy (DoE) recently issued a report which revealed that 17 utilities (including General Public Utilities) owe more than \$3 billion to the fund which will cover the cost of high level waste storage. DoE found that more than \$900 million has already been collected from ratepayers, but that 13 utilities are using the collected monies "to meet general expenses." DoE also warned that if a utility cannot meet its obligations for waste removal "it could threaten orderly disposal of the waste and present the NRC a more serious problem with decommissioning."

TMI Advisory Panel Meeting Set

The TMI Advisory Panel will meet from 7 to 10 p.m. on October 18 at the Holiday Inn, 23 South 2nd Street, Harrisburg. The panel will receive a presentation from GPU on the status of the clean-up and provide a presentation on their Decommissioning Funding Plan, recently submitted to the NRC. The Advisory Panel will continue the discussion on the future role of the panel now that the clean-up is "nearly completed." Anyone wanting to speak for more than three minutes at the meeting should contact Dr. Michael Masnik at the NRC (301/492-1442). Citizen involvement is important, particularly in light of the impending evaporation and the recent Columbia Health Report on cancer.



Items Worth \$45 Million Missing from Livermore Lab

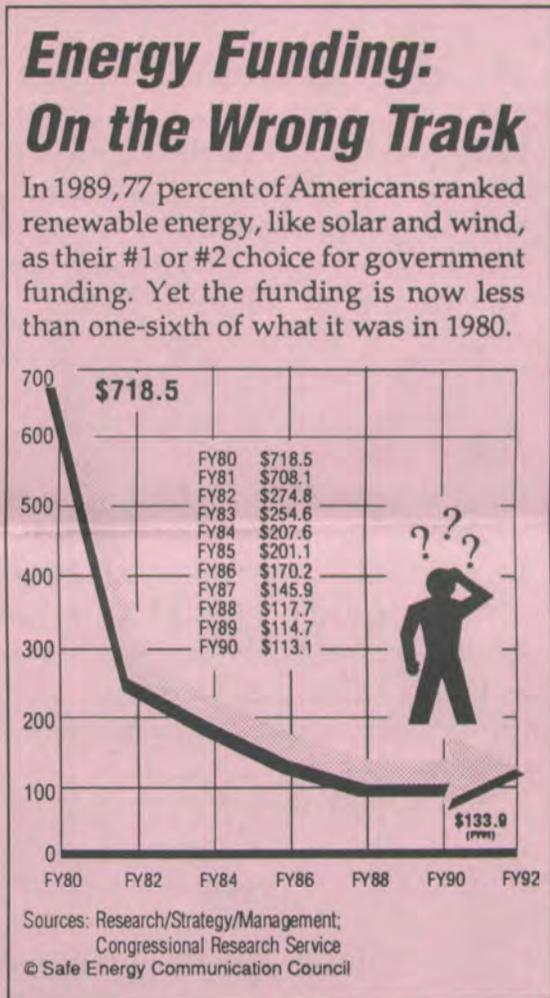
In July, the New York Times reported that \$45 million worth of inventory is missing from the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in California. The General Accounting Office said that laboratory officials could not account for 27,528 inventoried items, some of which they assume was stolen so workers would have money for drugs. The laboratory conducts nuclear weapons research and development.

Investigators said that among equipment that costs more than \$5,000, there were 1,605 items missing, valued at about \$20.6 million. Such equipment includes X-ray generators and oscilloscopes. For equipment valued at more than \$500 per item, 25,516 items were stolen, valued at \$24 million. In addition, 407 pieces of equipment costing at least \$150 per item—binoculars, cameras, tape recorders, etc.—valued at about \$800,000 also walked away. While 7,000 vehicles enter and leave the facility daily, they average about 17 vehicle searches per day.

News Notes

Congratulations and best wishes to TMIA Planning Council member Eric Epstein and Veronica Rodriguiz, married September 19. Eric is a long-time, key, indispensable, solid, committed TMIA volunteer and an instructor with OIC. Veronica is a middle school language teacher.

The Peace Calendar's 20th Anniversary Edition (& other holiday gifts) Available from TMIA - The Peace Calendar is one of the most popular social issue publications in the USA. It blends dynamic artwork, graphics and poetry by more than 25 artists with life-affirming, progressive values. For the 20th anniversary each grid carries a vignette about the calendar's evolution written by Dik Cook, its founder. People's history dates (revised each year) provide little known information on world history. Full color; 14x11; lunar cycles; religious holidays for many faiths. Available from TMIA for only \$10. TMIA also has the new "TMI Contaminated Forever" buttons for just 50¢ each and the ever-popular "They Lie" tee-shirts at a mere \$10 in all sizes.



TMIA's Planning Council met September 10, 1990 at the Harrisburg Friends Meeting-house. The Planning Council conducts the business of the organization between membership meetings and includes officers Deborah Baker, Vera Stuchinski, Cheryl Friedrich, and Betsy Robinson, as well as Eric Epstein, Dan Welliver, Bill Cologie and Kay Pickering. Agenda items included a Treasurer's report, monitoring network report, report on new sales items, discussion of the NRC's Below Regulatory Concern policy; Seabrook activities; GPUN's proposed evaporation of radioactive water; and our community education materials.

Calendar∞∞∞Calendar∞∞∞Calendar∞∞∞Calendar

- October 12-13 TMIA table at the East Mall's community days, 1st floor near the Hess entrance. To volunteer, call TMIA at 233-3072.
- October 18 7-10PM TMI Advisory Panel meeting at the Holiday Inn, 23 S. 2nd Street, Harrisburg
- October 26 9PM Halloween Party at the Circle-G, 2 miles north of Dauphin on Rts. 22-322. See enclosed flyer for details.
- December 15 Christmas Peace Pilgrimage. A ten-mile walk via Rt. 191 from Nazareth to Bethlehem, PA. 11:30AM-7:30 PM.

104th Annual

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DATE: Friday, Oct. 26

TIME: 9 P.M. Till ???

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