

BEFORE THE ATOMIC SAFETY AND LICENSING BOARD

February 21, 1983

The first study conducted in the Shoreham area dealt with the number of residents who might evacuate in the event of an emergency at the Shoreham plant. The study was administered to a stratified random sample of 2,595 persons, and it indicated the following. If a minor emergency were declared at the Shoreham plant but no one in the immediate vicinity was advised to evacuate, some 215,000 families would leave anyway -- roughly 25% of the local population. If a small-scale emergency were declared and a limited evacuation was called for of those residents who live within 5 miles of the power plant, roughly 2,700 families, more than 289,000 families would leave instead -- 33% of the population. If total evacuation were called for within a 10-mile radius of the plant, a measure that should affect 31,000 families, fully 430,000 families from all over Long Island would try to leave -- 50% of the general population.

The second study conducted in the Shoreham area dealt with volunteer firemen and school bus drivers, two groups of people that are expected to play important roles in the local evacuation plan. In the first part of the study, 291 interviews were conducted by telephone with members of the five fire departments immediately surrounding the Shoreham plant. Approximately 60% of the members of those departments were involved. The research indicates that as many as two-thirds of the firemen would not be available on an immediate basis in the event of an emergency involving evacuation because they would look first to the safety of their families. In the second part of the study, 246 school bus drivers who work in the five school districts within ten miles of the Shoreham plant were also interviewed, this time by a self-administered questionnaire. Virtually all of the school bus drivers in the five-district area were contacted. The drivers were asked essentially the same question as had been posed to the firemen, and it is clear from their responses that 69% would not report to emergency duty until they were assured that their families were safely out of the evacuation zone.

These are striking and important findings. They indicate in the sharpest way that the number of people who can be expected to evacuate in the event of even a minor emergency is far larger than any previous estimates have allowed for, and they further indicate that large numbers of people presently counted on to perform emergency duties of one kind or another in the event of an emergency will simply not be available.

But can the findings from Suffolk and Nassau Counties be used to predict what might happen in the neighborhoods surrounding Indian Point? Quite obviously, the best and most reliable procedure would be for the affected counties to commission a study along the lines of the one conducted by Suffolk County. In the absence of such studies, however, the data from Long Island form the best single indicator available anywhere of how the people living around Indian Point are likely to respond. For one thing, what people on Long Island say they are likely to do in the event of a future crisis matches almost exactly what the people living in the vicinity of Three Mile Island did in fact during a past crisis. In that emergency, some 2,500 people were advised to evacuate from neighborhoods within a 5-mile radius of the plant, but, instead, 144,000 people from all over the countryside left. This suggests a more general pattern: if the neighborhoods surrounding Three Mile Island and the neighborhoods surrounding Shoreham are alike in their reactions and their fears, it is only prudent to assume that the neighborhoods surrounding Indian Point are similar -- especially since the evidence of what happened at Three Mile Island, and the evidence available from the Suffolk County studies, are the only relevant sources of information to be found anywhere.

Moreover, testimony already presented at the Indian Point hearings shows clearly that local officials are quite doubtful that emergency personnel will report to duty immediately, exactly because they will be concerned about their families. Experienced school bus drivers and volunteer firemen have testified to that effect, as well as a number of local officials, including the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services of Westchester County, the Chief of Police

of the Village of Haverstraw, the Deputy Commissioner of Transportation of Westchester County, the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works of Westchester County, the Captain of the Ossining Volunteer Ambulance Corps, the Program Coordinator of the Putnam Association for Retarded Citizens, the Director of Camp Rainbow at Croton, the Director of the Croton Recreation Department Day Camp, and the Senior Recreation Leader of the Town of Clarkstown.

The weight of the evidence available to date leaves no other conclusion possible: any evacuation plan that fails to take into account (a) the number of people who are likely to over-react in the event of an emergency, and (b) the number of emergency personnel who will help their families evacuate rather than report to duty, has to be regarded as sorely -- and dangerously -- inadequate.