

SEPTEMBER 7 1979

Mr. Thomas Silberman  
RD 3327  
Fleetwood, PA 19522

Dear Mr. Silberman:

Your communication earlier this year concerning the Three Mile Island incident is appreciated. It was forwarded to me for reply. We regret that because of a significant increase in agency workload, so much time has passed and that perhaps my reply is not in time to meet your needs.

We appreciate your concerns and assure you that every effort is being made to ensure the continued protection of public health and safety, not only at Three Mile Island, but at all nuclear plant sites. In your letter you asked two questions about the operating staff at Three Mile Island. The specific responses to your questions are provided below.

Question: Are enough employees stationed at a plant such as this (or is there only a skeleton crew)?

Answer: The average number of people employed at a two-unit nuclear station is about 200 people. This number includes the managers, plant engineers, maintenance personnel, shift supervisors, reactor operators, health physics personnel, chemistry technicians, auxiliary equipment operators and clerical personnel. The number of people (excluding security personnel) at a two unit plant could be as low as eight if the two units shared a common control room. While eight persons sounds like a low number, all of the equipment necessary for the safety and operation of the plant can be controlled and monitored from the main control room.

Question: How qualified are the employees that run such plants?

Answer: The NRC has adopted minimum standards set by the American National Standards Institute for the selection and training of nuclear power plant personnel. The standard, ANSI 18.1, specifies the educational background and work experience required for positions such as plant superintendent, operations supervisor, maintenance supervisor, senior reactor operators (SRO's), reactor operators (RO's) etc. The people who are at the controls of the reactor are licensed by the NRC. The NRC issue two types of operator licenses; license and RO license. The experience and qualifications required before NRC will

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administer an examination for an SRO license are (1) high school diploma or equivalent; (2) four years power plant experience; two of these years must be at a nuclear power plant; and (3) at least six months experience at the reactor that the applicant seeks a license. The examination for a license includes a written and oral position on all aspects of an operating nuclear power plant.

As a result of the accident at Three Mile Island, Unit 2, we are currently reevaluating our requirements for licensed operators.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Harold R. Denton, Director  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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