

The Honorable Robert S. Walker

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Docket No. 50-320

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The Honorable Robert S. Walker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Walker:

This is in response to your transmittal dated October 2, 1979, which referred a letter from your constituent, Mr. Ronald Davis, to the NRC for reply.

Mr. Davis refers to the potential for an emergency situation to develop if the water level in the containment building at Three Mile Island, Unit 2, reaches a certain level. The water in the containment building has already disabled a substantial amount of instrumentation as well as some electrical components. Because of modifications made following the accident and different requirements for post-accident operation, the reactor is safely shutdown and cooled without the failed equipment. There are, however, certain motor-operated valves which are part of the decay heat removal system, the first of which would likely fail if the water level increases by 2.5 feet. Although the decay heat removal system is not currently in use, its availability is important.

In response to the specific questions raised by Mr. Davis, the current water level in the Unit 2 containment is 7.5 feet above the basement floor. The water level is rising at about 2 inches per month based on the current level of leakage into the building. We do not foresee any "emergency" situation developing for several reasons. The volume of the containment building is very large, and the sources of leakage are limited and currently small; therefore, any increase in the height of the water is slow. Since the height of the water in the containment building is measured each day, action could be taken to either stop the source of water or operate the motor-operated valves to the "open" position. We would expect this latter action to be initiated before the water level was within one-half foot of the valve's electrical components. This would not compromise safety since a closed, back-up isolation valve exists outside the containment building which is not subject to failure from containment water level.

I hope this has been responsive to the questions raised by Mr. Davis.

Sincerely,

90018201

Original signed by R. G. Smith

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