



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
631 PARK AVENUE
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406

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22 MAY 1979

Docket No. 50-289

Metropolitan Edison Company
ATTN: Mr. J. G. Herbein
Vice President - Generation
P. O. Box 542
Reading, Pennsylvania 19640

Gentlemen:

As a result of our experience during the recent accident at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station (TMI), the NRC has been reviewing the arrangements for immediate notifications by licensees and the availability of communications during emergencies. The initial notification from TMI to NRC was delayed due to several difficulties. Later, when concern was raised about evacuation, the telephone lines into the area around TMI became saturated. These and other difficulties experienced during the initial phases of the emergency necessitated that prompt action be taken to find alternate and more assured telephone arrangements.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company, the local telephone companies and the White House were extremely helpful in reestablishing and expanding the telephone communications systems between the TMI site, the NRC Operations Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and the Regional Office in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania; however, communications were limited while these lines were being worked on. These experiences clearly demonstrated the need to preestablish a limited number of direct and dedicated telephone lines at certain licensee sites to facilitate the initial notification of a nuclear incident and to assure continued communication.

The NRC has already taken steps to assure that there will be an individual available at all times to receive a call from any nuclear facility. As a further step to facilitate immediate notifications and to assure continued and uninterrupted communications with certain licensees, the NRC is arranging to install special telephone lines to all operating nuclear power plants and selected fuel facilities. When these lines are installed, they will supercede the need for any special arrangements that may have been made for open, continuous communication channels with the NRC in response to I&E Bulletin Series Nos. 79-05, 06 and 08 (for operating power reactor licensees only).

It is planned that there will be two direct and dedicated lines to each site. One line will be for communicating operational information and will be configured in such a manner that when the telephone is lifted from the cradle it will automatically ring in the NRC Operations Center and the appropriate Regional Office. For nuclear power plant sites there will be extensions in,

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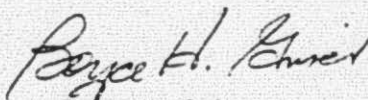
at least, each unit's control room, the shift supervisor's office, any emergency operations or relocation centers and the resident inspector's office where applicable. For fuel facility sites, extensions will be located in the Plant Manager's Office, the primary alarm station, any designated emergency relocation centers, and the resident inspector's office where applicable.

The second direct and dedicated line would be for communicating radiological and environmental information during an emergency. This would be a dial-up line, not automatic ringing, which would also tie together the site, the NRC Operations Center and the appropriate Regional Office. For most facilities, extensions would be needed in the main health physics office, any emergency operations or relocation centers and the resident inspector's office where applicable.

We are now preparing a proposed amendment to NRC regulations which will cover this request. Besides any discussion on the need for and placement of these telephone lines, it is anticipated that the Statement of Consideration will address the question of who will pay the continuing charges for these telephone lines. The NRC believes, however, that in the best interest of the public, installation should not be delayed pending settlement of the question of financial responsibility. Therefore, NRC will pay for the installation and service charges at least until a final rule can be promulgated.

In the meantime, we expect that each licensee will cooperate with the NRC and the local telephone companies in allowing these lines to be installed, as soon as is feasible. If you have any questions concerning these telephone lines, please call Mr. Robert Carlson of this office at (215) 337-5280.

Sincerely,



Boyce H. Grier
Director

cc:

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