



History

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EPA Named Lead Agency to Monitor at Three Mile Island

[EPA press release - April 4, 1980]

The Environmental Protection Agency has been designated by the White House as the lead Federal agency responsible for the monitoring of off-site radiation levels around Three Mile Island, and for the implementation of a comprehensive program to keep the local elected officials and the public fully informed of near- and long-term clean-up activities.

The Agency, as the independent environmental regulatory arm of the Federal government, will be kept informed of the status of the disabled reactor #2 and proposed on-site clean-up actions by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The Commission will work with EPA to provide the public and state and local officials with all the necessary information on clean-up operations in a manner that will allow full and open discussions prior to any final action.

H. Matthew Bills, of EPA's Office of Monitoring and Technical Support in Washington, D.C., will coordinate the Agency's activities in the Three Mile Island area. All federal agencies involved in the immediate and long-term clean-up operations are making extensive efforts to provide complete information to the citizens, the elected officials and the media.

Actions announced today include:

1. Establishment of an environmental radiation monitoring information office by the Environmental Protection Agency. This office, to be located in Middletown, Pennsylvania, will collect information on radiation levels in the environment around the plant and communicate this information directly and promptly to the general public and to the news media. An extensive radiation monitoring system has been in place around Three Mile Island for the last year. With the establishment of an EPA office on-site, residents will be able to telephone a central information desk to obtain specific information and to arrange briefings for community groups, on overall clean-up activities.

Erich W. Bretthauer, Director of EPA's Nuclear Radiation Assessment Division, has been named project manager at Three Mile Island for the monitoring program.

2. The Department of Energy, in cooperation with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, is establishing a community-based radiation monitoring program. DOE's Nuclear Energy Division is making funds available to provide radiation monitoring instruments, and is arranging to train citizens in their use. The radiation monitoring instruments will be located in communities near the Three Mile Island site and will be under the supervision of local officials. Education and training on the use of the instruments and interpretation of data will be conducted by the faculty of Pennsylvania State University under the guidance of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources.

3. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's staff in its Middletown Office and at NRC headquarters will be strengthened to oversee and regulate clean-up activities at the Three Mile Island plant. The NRC has appointed Dr. Bernard J. Snyder to be program manager to direct clean-up operations at the plant. Dr. Snyder will supervise and manage the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement on the clean-up, and any related environmental assessments. Approximately 20 NRC personnel will be stationed permanently in the Three Mile Island area under Dr. Snyder's direction to manage the technical, public information and government relations aspects of the clean-up.
4. EPA and NRC will jointly establish a continuous and comprehensive program that will provide the general public and the state and local officials the opportunity to fully assess and comment on proposed actions regarding the clean-up of the Three Mile Island facility.

Meeting with community groups are now underway to explain the status of clean-up activities and to discuss options being considered for removing the 57,000 curies of radioactive krypton gas in the containment building. The NRC staff has issued a draft environmental assessment on removal of the krypton gas and is actively pursuing public comments on this matter.