

Nuclear wastes from TMI 2 could stay on island for 25 years

By PATRICE FLINCHBAUGH

Of the Daily Record

MIDDLETOWN — Unwanted high-level radioactive wastes at Three Mile Island could stay there until the year 2005.

Of course, federal officials might find a burial site sooner for solid by-products of TMI's cleanup. However, given the current political climate, it may be 12 to 25 years before that happens.

So admitted the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Monday during a press briefing on agency's recently released environmental impact study of various TMI cleanup techniques.

Federal agencies are caught in a web of what one Lancaster anti-nuclear lawyer calls "institutional paralysis" over high-level radioactive wastes from any commercial nuclear plant.

Nuclear engineers look to the federal government for development of disposal sites, but one recent study suggested it should be a regional or state-level decision.

The NRC hasn't decided whether TMI's accident wastes are high-level, but NRC program director Bernard Snyder said on Monday some are likely to be.

If that is true, NRC's three licensed commercial burial sites

would not be authorized to accept the wastes.

Snyder said the material could be combined with nuclear weapons waste, given a cooperative political climate. But he said military sites are reluctant to accept NRC licensee's wastes for fear that NRC might grab a piece of the regulatory action on their turf.

If all else fails, the waste would stay temporarily packed on the island or get shipped to laboratories for "further processing," Snyder said.

"We hope that won't happen," Snyder said about the prospect of long-term storage in the middle of the Susquehanna River. Both NRC and TMI officials have repeatedly said they do not intend to turn TMI into a high-level radioactive waste dump.

The environmental impact state-

ment was presented Aug. 14 to the full Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Following a 45-day comment period, a final draft will be issued.

After that time, probably in December, says Snyder, the utility's suggested method of cleaning up 700,000 gallons of its accident water will be evaluated in the context of the environmental statement.

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Met-Ed GPU Nuclear

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What's in a name?

By PATRICE FLINCHBAUGH
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These days, Three Mile Island's operator prefers to be called General Public Utilities Nuclear Group, rather than Metropolitan Edison. Utility officials say Met-Ed is now nothing more than a bill collector for GPU-Nuclear, the latter being a "generating company, single-mindedly devoted to running a nuclear power plant."

Met-Ed, however, still holds the power plant's operating license, pending federal approval of the license transfer.

TMI officials acknowledge the public relations value of the name

change, but they say there's more to it than that.

"The perception of the public is that nothing has changed at TMI," said Doug Bedell, TMI spokesman, "but we're not trying to turn a horse into a zebra...we're talking about a whole different corporation."

Not so, argues Three Mile Island Alert, an anti-nuclear group which contends the utility's act is the same — only the characters have changed.

"Although job descriptions are different, many of the same people remain in positions similar to ones they held before the March 28, 1979 See TMI on 9A

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accident," said Louise Bradford, a Harrisburg resident who has been monitoring federal safety hearings on TMI Unit 1 for TMI Alert.

TMI Alert's case before the federal panel rests on the group's belief TMI's managers remain ill-prepared to run Unit 1, despite changes made in maintenance and management procedures after the accident.

For example, Ms. Bradford says, of the 10 vice presidents who comprise GPU-Nuclear's new top management staff, Jack Herbein still holds a key position in emergency management on the island.

Before the accident, Herbein was vice president in charge of generation. He supervised the power plant's operation, according to company spokesmen.

According to the Rogovin (Nuclear Regulatory Commission special inquiry group) report, Herbein sent two senior utility decisionmakers to the Governor's office during the March 28 accident. The trio was met later that day on the steps of the state capitol by Herman Dieckamp, then-presi-

dent of GPU-Service Corp, who was quoted as saying, "My God, who is watching the store?"

Now, Herbein is vice president and director of nuclear assurance. According to Ms. Bradford, Herbein is third in the chain of command over emergency-related personnel on the island.

Ms. Bradford also suggests middle management under the new company is similar to pre-accident leadership. As an example, she said Daniel Showlin, maintenance supervisor of Unit 1, held that post before the accident.

"We didn't have a purge, a slaughter," said Bedell. "Sure, there are some individuals remaining who (worked here) before the accident, but the tone and style — particular attention to detail, care in training — is set by top management, which is quite different."

Bedell said Herbein is the only left-over from pre-accident days at TMI. New vice-presidential recruits to top management include Phillip Clark, Henry Hukill, director of TMI Unit 1; Gale Hovey, Unit 2 director; Frank Mangano, di-

rector of maintenance construction; and William Gifford, communications director.

Robert Arnold, GPU-Nuclear president and chief operating executive; plus vice presidents Richard Howard, radiation and environmental controls director; Richard Wilson, technical functions director; and Fred Glickman, administrative director, previously worked for GPU-Service Corp., he added.

GPU-Service Corp. is a Parsippany, N.J.-based subsidiary of GPU which provides engineering and administrative support to the utility system's three nuclear and coal-fired power plants run by Met-Ed, Jersey Central Power and Light, and Pennsylvania Electric Co.

Bedell stressed Met-Ed still operates a coal-fired power plant near Reading.

Officially, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission must approve any corporate changes in the operation and licensing of a nuclear plant. Last fall, it approved parent company GPU's administrative take-over of the Middletown plant.