

100-20909

SUMMARY OF JUNE 8, 1983  
 STATEMENT OF  
 RALPH V. CARLONE  
 DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
 RESOURCES, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
 U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
 BEFORE THE  
 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY CONSERVATION AND POWER  
 HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
 ON  
 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AROUND  
 NUCLEAR POWERPLANTS

Our statement highlights General Accounting Office's work on Federal, State, and local emergency planning and preparedness for responding to a nuclear powerplant accident. In brief the statement covers

- Our 1979 report in which we recommended that NRC allow nuclear powerplants to begin operation only where State and local emergency response plans contain all of NRC's essential planning elements. We concluded that if State or local authorities were unable to demonstrate their continued ability to protect public health and safety a potential site should be eliminated.
- We are finalizing our most recent work which was focused on FEMA's operations. Our preliminary indications are that many States and communities with nuclear powerplants are still not adequately prepared to respond to an emergency.
- Development of acceptable offsite response plans is a difficult process requiring full participation of a myriad of Federal, State, and local agencies.

026321



122039

122039

UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY  
Expected at 10:30 a.m.  
Wednesday, June 8, 1983

STATEMENT OF  
RALPH V. CARLONE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
RESOURCES, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY CONSERVATION AND POWER  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
ON  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AROUND  
NUCLEAR POWERPLANTS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We welcome the opportunity to be here today to discuss our work on Federal, State, and local emergency planning and preparedness as it relates to the section of H.R. 2510 dealing with emergency planning requirements for nuclear powerplants. Our most recent effort focused on the operations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which now has the lead Federal responsibility for offsite safety. We are currently finalizing our most recent work. In March 1979, we reported that "Areas Around Nuclear Facilities Should Be Better Prepared For Radiological Emergencies" (EMD-78-110, Mar. 30, 1979). In my testimony today I will initially cover those points in our 1979 report that are pertinent to today's hearing and I will discuss to some extent our tentative findings from our more recent review.

During our earlier review the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had primary responsibility for assisting State and local governments. As part of its planning assistance to States at

that time, NRC reviewed State plans to determine whether they contained what the Commission considered to be essential planning and preparedness elements. NRC found only 10 State plans that had all the essential elements. But it continued to license nuclear power reactors in States that did not have all of the essential planning elements. We recommended in our 1979 report that NRC allow nuclear powerplants to begin operation only where State and local emergency response plans contain all the Commission's essential planning elements. In addition, we recommended that NRC require license applicants to make agreements with State and local agencies requiring their full participation in annual emergency exercises over the life of the facility. NRC disagreed with our recommendations but public and congressional debate continues as to whether NRC should have such a policy.

We recognized the importance of linking the adequacy of State and local capabilities for implementing offsite protective actions to the licensing process. We concluded that if State or local authorities were unable to demonstrate their continued ability to protect public health and safety, a potential site should be eliminated from consideration during the licensing process. Recent events at Indian Point and Shoreham have underscored the importance of early and full participation of Federal, State, and local governments as well as utilities in the emergency preparedness process. The situation involving the

Indian Point powerplant highlights the problems that occur from the withdrawal of one locality from participation in required planning and preparedness activities. With respect to the Shoreham powerplant, Suffolk county officials have concluded that adequate offsite planning and preparedness can not be achieved and they are attempting to prevent the substantially completed powerplant from starting operations.

Over 4 years have elapsed since the Three Mile Island accident and although considerable progress has been made in emergency planning and preparedness, our recent work shows that many States and communities with nuclear powerplants are still not adequately prepared to respond to an emergency. Between December 1979 and April 1983, FEMA, as part of its mission, obtained, reviewed, and tested offsite emergency preparedness plans at all 53 operating nuclear powerplants. It only approved 16 and does not anticipate completing approval of the remaining plans until 1985. In the meantime new plants can be licensed to operate and existing plants can continue operating even though FEMA has reported that the plans are not meeting the established Federal criteria. This situation exists because

--A clear-cut mechanism for funding the preparation and testing of emergency plans has not been developed. As a result, some State and local governments have refused to

participate in the preparedness process and/or have moved slowly in correcting deficiencies. Methods of paying for emergency-related expenses vary. In some cases, States impose a special assessment on utilities, in others, utilities make voluntary contributions to State and local organizations, and in still others, no satisfactory funding procedure exists. Although most State, local, and utility officials agree that the utilities should fund the costs associated with developing acceptable offsite emergency plans, they often disagree on the mechanism and the amount of funds that should be provided.

--Local communities that want to prevent or delay plants from operating are relying on their refusal to participate in the emergency planning process to achieve their wishes. Neither NRC or FEMA has direct leverage over these communities and NRC's only influence is through its plant licensing process.

--FEMA has not always fully informed NRC of deficiencies in offsite planning and preparedness even though it relies on NRC to stimulate correction of significant deficiencies. Also, NRC has not questioned the lack of information they had requested from FEMA.

Also, the way FEMA carried out its oversight responsibilities for exercising emergency preparedness plans introduces a degree of uncertainty as to whether the 16 approved plans fully comply with Federal planning criteria. For example,

- FEMA relies on States and utilities to set their own exercise objectives and scenarios even though Federal regulations require FEMA and NRC involvement to ensure adequate scope.
- FEMA has no criteria for an adequate exercise; as a result, critical plan elements are not always evaluated. FEMA has concluded that the results of some exercises were adequate but later acknowledged that the scope of these exercises was not sufficient to demonstrate an ability to test certain critical plan elements.
- FEMA does not provide State and local governments timely feedback on plan and exercise evaluations. As a result, correction of deficiencies may be unnecessarily delayed.
- FEMA does not have procedures for tracking the extent that deficiencies from previous exercises are corrected. As a result, FEMA has concluded that preparedness is adequate even though it has no evidence that deficiencies from an earlier exercise have been corrected.

- - - -

Short of full participation of the various entities, added pressure is placed on NRC to promptly consider, balance, and resolve the relevant health and safety, economic, and political issues. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to respond to your questions.

SUMMARY OF JUNE 8, 1983  
STATEMENT OF  
RALPH V. CARLONE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
RESOURCES, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY CONSERVATION AND POWER  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
ON  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AROUND  
NUCLEAR POWERPLANTS

Our statement highlights General Accounting Office's work on Federal, State, and local emergency planning and preparedness for responding to a nuclear powerplant accident. In brief the statement covers

- Our 1979 report in which we recommended that NRC allow nuclear powerplants to begin operation only where State and local emergency response plans contain all of NRC's essential planning elements. We concluded that if State or local authorities were unable to demonstrate their continued ability to protect public health and safety a potential site should be eliminated.
- We are finalizing our most recent work which was focused on FEMA's operations. Our preliminary indications are that many States and communities with nuclear powerplants, are still not adequately prepared to respond to an emergency.
- Development of acceptable offsite response plans is a difficult process requiring full participation of a myriad of Federal, State, and local agencies.