



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
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To the Government Security News Editor:

A column in your Oct. 24 issue, written by Steven Lewis, talked about the very important subject of evacuations and the lessons learned in Hurricane Katrina. However, the article failed to recognize the important distinction between an evacuation around a nuclear power plant and the mass exodus seen before Katrina.

Mr. Lewis calls the Three Mile Island event a "quick strike" evacuation issue. The event unfolded over days and was not a "quick strike." The events at Three Mile Island transpired between the early hours of Wednesday, March 28, 1979, and the following Sunday when the worst of the crisis had passed. (For the record, there was no significant release to the public related to this event and no large-scale evacuation was ordered.)

Problems at nuclear plants unfold more slowly than commonly thought. There is ample time for local officials to direct evacuations of potentially affected areas, and most scenarios suggest that typically only a "pie-slice" of an area near a plant would need protective action. In such an event - unlike in an hurricane - sheltering in place can be a viable option for the majority of residents. In other words, mass evacuations, while necessary in some natural disasters, is not as likely to be needed in a nuclear power plant event. We feel this is an important distinction to make.

Moreover, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission works closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, state and local authorities and plant operators, and conducts regular drills on emergency preparedness issues related to nuclear power plants.

Sincerely,

Eliot Brenner  
Director, Office of Public Affairs