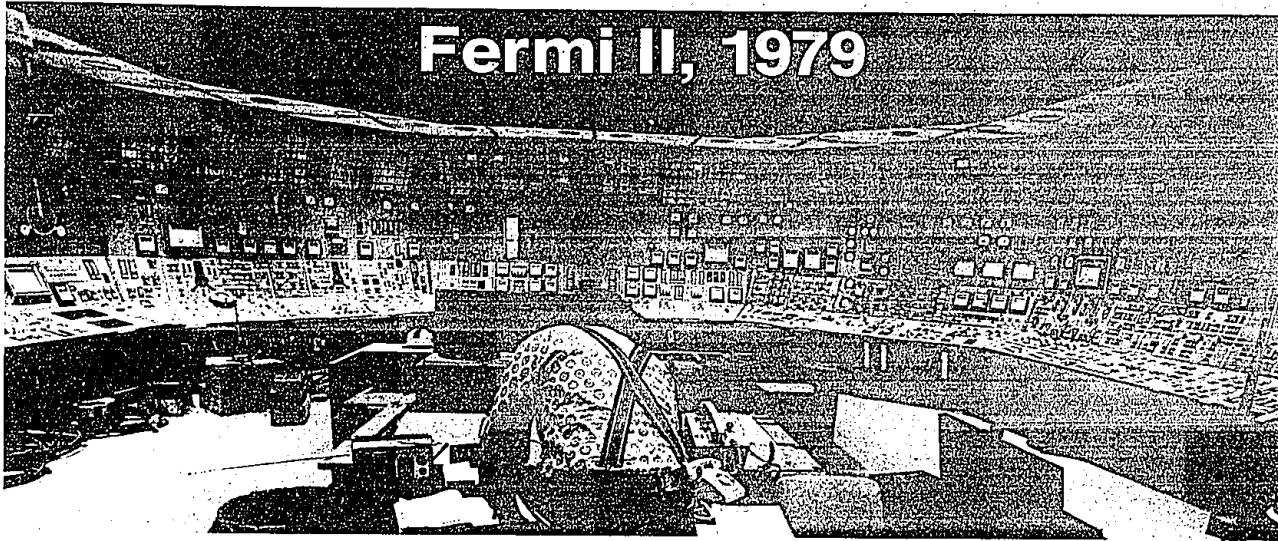


Fermi II, 1979



GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Radiation doubtful, but they're ready

By Sharon Dargay
staff writer

DR. CONRAD NAGLE, chief of nuclear medicine at William Beaumont Hospital-Troy, has never treated a case of radiation contamination.

Neither has Thomas Kasza, radiological physicist at Providence Hospital in Southfield.

Nor have specialists at Crittenton Hospital in Rochester Hills and Botsford Hospital in Farmington.

But spokesmen from all four facilities say they're prepared to handle radiation emergencies — even though a situation similar to that triggered by the nuclear reactor meltdown in the Soviet Union appears unlikely in southeastern Michigan.

"There is a Michigan Emergency

Preparedness Plan that was enacted a number of years ago," said Dennis Hahn, spokesman for the Radiological Health Division of the state Health Department. "The principal responsibility has been with the State Police."

"This department has an annex to that plan. Communication links are set up so there's a direct hotline to the nuclear power plant and to the health department people who are doing radiation assessment."

Both Oakland County and state health department spokesmen stressed that the Soviet nuclear reactor accident will have little — if any — effect on radiation levels in southeastern Michigan.

RUSS TUTTLE, director of community relations at Botsford, and Crittenton spokeswoman Peggy

Nagi agreed that annual emergency disaster drills prepare the staff to respond to real accidents or epidemics.

"If there was a radioactive emergency, two things would have to happen simultaneously. First we would have to care for the patient, but equally important is the protection of the staff and hospital from radiation," Providence's Kasza noted.

Providence Hospital staff would determine the kind and quantity of radiation affecting each patient, setting up temporary isolation quarters for those contaminated by the "hot" substance.

Beaumont-Troy keeps a permanent decontamination room in its emergency department. Nagle emphasized that contamination occurs only when the radioactive sub-

stance remains in or on the patient's clothing or person.

Once the substance has dissipated or washed off of a patient, it stops causing physical harm. However, damage caused before decontamination is permanent.

DECONTAMINATION methods vary, depending on the form of radioactive substance exposed to the patient. Showering is a typical method of removing topical substances. Iodine solutions also are prescribed to block radioactive iodine gases, often present in nuclear reactors, from leeching into the thyroid.

"Everyone thinks all radiation is the same and it's not," Nagle said. The Karen Silkwood movie had vivid pictures of Meryl Streep in decontamination. In that case, that was a unique powder type of radio-

active substance that can get under finger nails and embedded in skin. Because the radioactivity was so very high they went to a more rigorous shower.

"When people see things on television — like the Soviet accident — they even begin to worry about (radiation) tests they have medically."

Hospital spokesmen say epidemic-causing accidents are unlikely to occur in Oakland County because radioactive materials are not widely used in the area.

And they doubt that their facilities would receive any patients injured as a result of a meltdown at the Fermi nuclear reactor in Monroe.

"I can think of a half-dozen hospitals between here and there that would get them first," Tuttle noted.

BUT THAT doesn't put Dr. Molly Hayden at ease.

The Birmingham woman is past co-chair of Physicians for Social Responsibility and a doctor at Beaumont-Troy.

"I think people should be concerned about Fermi. That kind of thing (a meltdown) can happen. We don't have a safe way to dispose of nuclear waste, and we have enough fossil fuel, gas and oil to carry us through until we find a safe way," she said.

"One of the byproducts of nuclear power plants is plutonium. That's what we make nuclear weapons out of. In that sense, we ought to learn from the nuclear power plant accident. The lesson we should learn is that if we can have an accident in a nuclear power plant we can have an accidental war."

Edison defends plant

Continued from Page 1

port of their position.

THE REQUEST was made by telegram and was co-authored by a second environmental group, the Great Lakes Energy Alliance, and asked that operations at three Michigan plants, and a fourth plant in its testing phase, be halted. The telegram cited potential safety problems leading to a "major accident threatening the people and the environment of Michigan," as the reason for the request.

Whether the governor's office has the power to issue such an order is questionable, according to reports from the state's Public Service Commission, although, according to Johnston, "the responsibility of government to protect the people in this state overrides any federal law."

MARTIN BUFALINI, spokesman for Detroit Edison, said no comparison could be made between the Soviet nuclear plant and those in the United States.

Although Friday's demonstration in front of the company's building was a peaceful one, he said Edison does not agree with the group's request to do away with all nuclear facilities.

"We think that would be unwise," he said about closing the plants. "Our plant is a safe plant — not at all like the Russian plant."

According to reports from Western nuclear industry experts, the Soviet reactor was not built with the same level of safety features present in U.S. plants. Bufalini concurs.

"The safe operations of nuclear plants in the United States is closely controlled," he explained. "Standards require safety systems with multiple backups, which are regulated by the National Regulatory Commission."

THE REACTOR vessels have six-inch steel walls and an emergency water cooling system, Bufalini said. He said the building itself has 4-8-foot concrete walls, which act as a barrier at the company's Fermi II nuclear facility in Monroe. Edison is planning to start operations at the plant sometime in July, pending issuance of a full-power operating license.

The facility is the main plant targeted by coalition members, many of whom live in the Monroe area, Johnston said.

The coalition, founded in 1977, "represents another body of opinion," contrary to nuclear engineers and other professionals, Johnston said.



'The (Soviet nuclear) accident is what we have been abstractly talking about all along.'

— Mary Johnston
Safe Energy Coalition
of Michigan

Southeast Michigan residents are receiving "false reassurances" about nuclear safety systems, and others throughout the United States, Johnston maintains. "They (safety systems) were never meant to sustain the heat of molten uranium in a meltdown," she said.

THE SOVIET accident has raised local concern about Michigan plants, all near Lakes Michigan and Erie, Johnston said. Although people think more today about the possibility of nuclear war, they think of local nuclear power facilities as "rather benign," she added.

The Soviet Union accident reportedly occurred over a period of several days, beginning April 26. Reports from various sources, including Sov-

iet news agencies, told of evacuation of thousands in the Ukraine when there was a reported meltdown, fire and explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant near the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. The accident was discovered in nearby Scandinavian countries when radiation was detected in the air.

TEMPERATURES MAY have reached more than 7,000 degrees in the plant's graphite reactor core, according to reports from U.S. officials.

In a meltdown, radioactive steam in a reactor core burns through the protective casing, and any containment building and escapes into the air and ground.

5 Hills firms on 'Tech 50'

Five Farmington Hills companies are among 50 high-tech businesses that make up "Michigan's Tech 50," the state's 50 largest manufacturers of high tech products.

Arthur Anderson & Co., The Detroit Free Press and the Michigan High Technology Task Force released the list April 28.

Local firms on the list were:
• Dynapower Corp. (14), which makes D.C. power supply systems used in particle accelerator research, fusion testing and electro-galvanizing.
• Percepton Inc. (15), which designs and integrates machine-vision systems that use electro-optics and

image processing technology, to manage manufacturing and assembly.

• Medar Inc. (20), which designs and develops microprocessor-based resistance welding controls, laser gauging and inspection systems for monitoring and quality control in manufacturing.

• ParaData Computer Networks Inc. (23), which develops and markets data communication hardware and software, including a loan processing system.

• Executive Technology Data Systems (42), which develops and integrates software for micro- and mini-computers and laser disc products for accounting.

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