

a sampling of

Strange but True

TMI Accident Facts

1

No one knows exactly how the accident started! In fact the Nuclear Regulatory Commission states that they do not need to know.

2

When the NRC was asked for advice to help mitigate the accident, the NRC responded that it does not tell its Licensees how to run their plants.

3

During the crisis, one NRC Commissioner hoped for a “good pipe break.” He hoped that it would trigger automated safety systems to bring the plant into a safe condition. He wanted to overwork and overheat a control rod drive motor to start a fire and thereby causing the mechanism to fall off the reactor leaving a hole for coolant to escape.

4

At the time of the accident, only one NRC employee had a Reactor Operator’s License!

5

An explosion in the TMI reactor building on the first day was not reported to the NRC for 2 days. A few months later it was revealed to the public but the pressure spike was missing from the time graph.

6

At the time of the accident TMI's maintenance staff was about half of what it should have been. As a result there were about 800 to 1,000 maintenance items that had not been worked on at the time of the core melt.

7

TMI had a "Don't Fix it Policy"

"We all knew what [the rules] were. If it wasn't safety-required, or didn't degrade the ability of the plant to run at 100% power, it wasn't a necessary change. That's what I was told. And if anybody in GPU says otherwise, they're kidding themselves. Those were the ground rules."

Deposition of Gary Miller - TMI Station Manager

8

GPU falsified reactor leak rates to the NRC and plead guilty in 1983. Falsifying the reactor leak rates kept the reactor operating when it should have been shut down for repairs. In fact there would have been no accident on March 28th if GPU had not falsified that data.

9

The Head of TMI's Training Department did not have an operator's license. After his appointment he spent half of his time, and later all of his time, studying for his license. In November of 1978, he took the examination and failed.

10

Many people blame the TMI accident for putting a halt to the nuclear power industry. Not true! The orders for new plants stopped in 1978 when States' Attorneys General lawsuits were lodged against General Electric (GE). The reason for the lawsuit was to recover the additional costs incurred to correct safety defects which GE knowingly hid from the nuclear industry. Utilities were reluctant to order new plants until billions of dollars in safety systems disputes were settled.

What was the principal defect claimed in the lawsuits? The same one which blew up the reactors at Fukushima Japan in 2011. The hidden documents showed that GE designers knew that the Mark I containment building under accident conditions has a 100% failure rate .

Reactor #1 at Fukushima Daiichi was scheduled to shutdown the following month after the Tsunami hit.

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Similarities: TMI & Fukushima

Issue Fukushima TMI comment

Communications	Everything is under control.	Everything is under control.	Code for were having trouble shutting down.
Obfuscation	Radiation might have “seeped out” or “leaked out.”	NRC commissioners argue for two hours how to word a press release without using the word “release.”	Both incidents avoid the word “release.”
Assurances Before the Crisis	Following previous earthquakes, the industry repeated the lie that these robust plants were designed to handle an earthquake.	A meteor would hit your house before a nuclear accident would ever occur We have backup after backup.	Without properly functioning emergency diesel generators, an accident is only a step or two away.
Potassium Iodide	No orders to take the thyroid protecting pill before planned releases.	No pills readily available.	The NRC promised to provide these pills following the accident. It took more than 20 years to do
Poor Instrumentation	With electrical problems, the operators were totally in the dark	Poor control panel layouts, poorly designed controls, a faulty alarm printer	Even the best mitigation planning is foiled when electrical circuits short from sea water or from melted wires.