

Poll says Americans still expect accident at nuke power plant

NEW YORK (AP) — Half the Americans in a national poll believe a serious accident is likely at a U.S. nuclear power plant, despite safeguards put in place since the Three Mile Island accident a decade ago.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents in the Media General-Associated Press survey supported the use of nuclear power to generate electricity. But eight in 10 favored tougher federal safety regulations, and most opposed building new plants.

Most also opposed starting up completed nuclear power plants that are not yet running. And while 48 percent said currently operating plants should stay open, 44 percent said they should be either phased out or shut down at once.

The national survey of 1,162 adults had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent. It was conducted Jan. 4-12 in advance of the 10th anniversary of the accident March 28, 1979, at the Three Mile Island plant in Middletown, Pa.

Tighter federal regulation of the nuclear power industry resulted from the TMI accident, which destroyed one of the plant's two reactors.

In the survey, 63 percent said they believed nuclear power plants are safer now.

However, when asked to rate the chance of a serious accident at a nuclear power plant in the United States, 11 percent chose "highly likely" and 39 percent said likely, for a total of 50 percent. Thirty percent said a serious accident was unlikely and 14 percent said "highly unlikely," for a total of 44 percent. The remaining 6 percent had no opinion.

An overwhelming 79 percent said the federal government should be tougher in enforcing safety rules. And 62 percent said governors should have the power to shut down nuclear power plants in their states.

Regulation aside, 56 percent said they believe it is impossible to safely store long-term radioactive waste from nuclear power plants. Just 27 percent called safe storage possible and 18 percent weren't sure.

Support for nuclear power was markedly higher among men and Republicans. Two-thirds of those groups supported nuclear power generally, compared with half the Democrats and independents and just 45 percent of the women polled.

Six in 10 women and as many Democrats said an accident was likely, compared with four in 10 of the men and the Republicans. While 58 percent of the respondents with high school educations feared an accident, that fell to 37 percent of those with postgraduate schooling.

Only a third overall said more nuclear power plants should be built in the United States; of those who favored more plants, three-quarters said they would accept one within 10 miles of their home. No new nuclear power plant construction permits have been issued since 1979.

Just two in 10 said nuclear power plants that have been completed but not yet licensed should be allowed to open. Such plants in Seabrook, N.H., and Shoreham, N.Y., have been stalled in part by opposition from the governor in New York and, in Seabrook's case, the governor of neighboring Massachusetts.

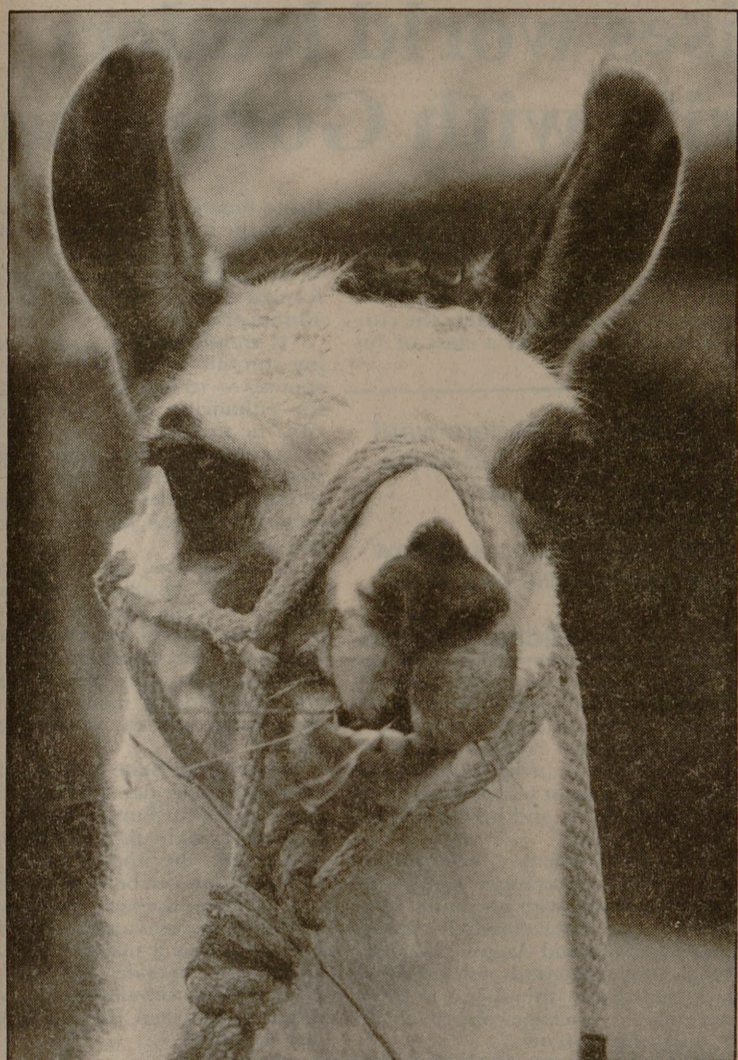


Photo by Mike C. Mulvey

Get outta my face

Tony the llama enjoys a snack by Rudder Fountain while on display Monday. The International Student Association borrowed Tony from the College of Veterinary Medicine for display as part of International Week. Llamas are one of the most common animals of Peru.

Crime in America

News service reporters ride with lawmen to chart a day of crime

EDITOR'S NOTE — To chart one day's crime in America, Associated Press reporters in major cities rode in squad cars, shadowed undercover officers and pored through police reports on Feb. 22. Here are their findings.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Eric Williams, 19, sat in the fading heat of an 86-degree Los Angeles day when a car full of menacing young men cruised down Van Ness Avenue at 7:30 p.m.

Shotgun blasts exploded from the car, and Williams fell dead in a crime known as a drive-by shooting. Williams was not known to be a member of a gang. He may have just been in the way of shots aimed at someone else, police said, or he may have been wearing the colors of a rival outfit.

"A wrong look or wearing the wrong color in a certain neighborhood can get you killed," said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Capt. Raymond Gott.

Of the 55 slayings in Williams' neighborhood this year, 15 are believed related to gangs wiping out competitors and protecting their turf. At least four gangs grossed \$1 million a week each last year in cocaine sales, according to Police Commander Lorne Kramer.

"These urban terrorists are destroying hopes for a normal life," said Kramer.

Similar battles are played out daily in every major U.S. city where police fight drugs and crime, which often go hand in hand. On a given day, an average of 2,568 arrests are made for possessing, selling and making drugs, according to the FBI.

Half to three-fourths of the people arrested

for serious crimes tested positive for illicit drug use, according to a 1988 U.S. Justice Department study. Drugs can lead to murder, assault, prostitution, theft, robbery and burglary.

"Crime and drugs are umbilically connected," said Peter Bensinger, former director of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and now a drug consultant in Chicago. "The impact is devastating our cities and our streets."

New York fights the street-by-street war with a Tactical Narcotics Team, or TNT, a sort of special forces unit whose uniforms are filthy jeans and shabby sweat shirts rather than green berets.

Steady rain didn't stop them from donning bulletproof vests and earphones connected to hidden walkie-talkies.

"A junkie doesn't know rain, a junkie doesn't know sleet or cold, a junkie just wants to get off," Lt. Joseph Murphy said.

Among the busts this day, an undercover officer got past a lookout and into a drug den, the basement of an abandoned building that reeked of urine and rotting garbage in the South Bronx.

The officer bought heroin, and others waiting in an unmarked car moved in for the bust. Three arrests netted a fistful of heroin packets worth \$100. A search of the dealer's office showed 170 of 400 heroin packets were sold before the raid.

In one week, police arrested 125 people and seized 16 cars, two guns, \$8,633 in cash and a cache of cocaine, crack, heroin and pot.

With the temperature at 36 degrees, a 20-mph wind whipped through southeast Atlanta, a tough neighborhood known by the cops as "The Zoo."

"They should put a cage around the whole zone," patrolman Scott Bennett said.

The cold slowed the drug trade to about one-third its usual pace. But Ricky Davis was arrested for alleged possession after a chase. Police found a leather pouch containing nine plastic bags, each holding a pea-sized fragment of crack cocaine.

At one point, a reporter was advised to duck behind a trash bin if gunfire erupted.

In Miami, an undercover narcotics team made 14 arrests in assembly line fashion. One was a 16-year-old selling crack outside his apartment.

Across the city that day, about 200 of an estimated 1,000 armed robberies, auto thefts and burglaries were believed to have been drug-related, said police spokesman Ray Lang.

A 17-year-old St. Louis man was busted on his birthday Wednesday when police seized \$1,500 in cash and \$4,700 in drugs.

Police saw him selling drugs the day before but couldn't find his stash. "Yeah, man, I'll be 17," he taunted officers.

"So they paid a visit to his house on his birthday," Sgt. Leman Dobbins said. "If he's going to play in the grown folks' world, we're going to treat him like one."

Police said six of the 14 crimes reported Wednesday were drug-related.

"We've run across some dope dealers (with) a Mercedes Benz that's paid for in cash," Dobbins said. "But when you got to arrest him, he doesn't even know how to spell his middle name. Whoever said crime does not pay is a fool."

The 52 drug arrests in Baltimore on Wednesday included a federal fugitive wanted for allegedly helping a notorious drug kingpin arrange a multimillion-dollar heroin deal from his jail cell. Three other arrests followed a raid that netted \$500,000 worth of drugs.

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