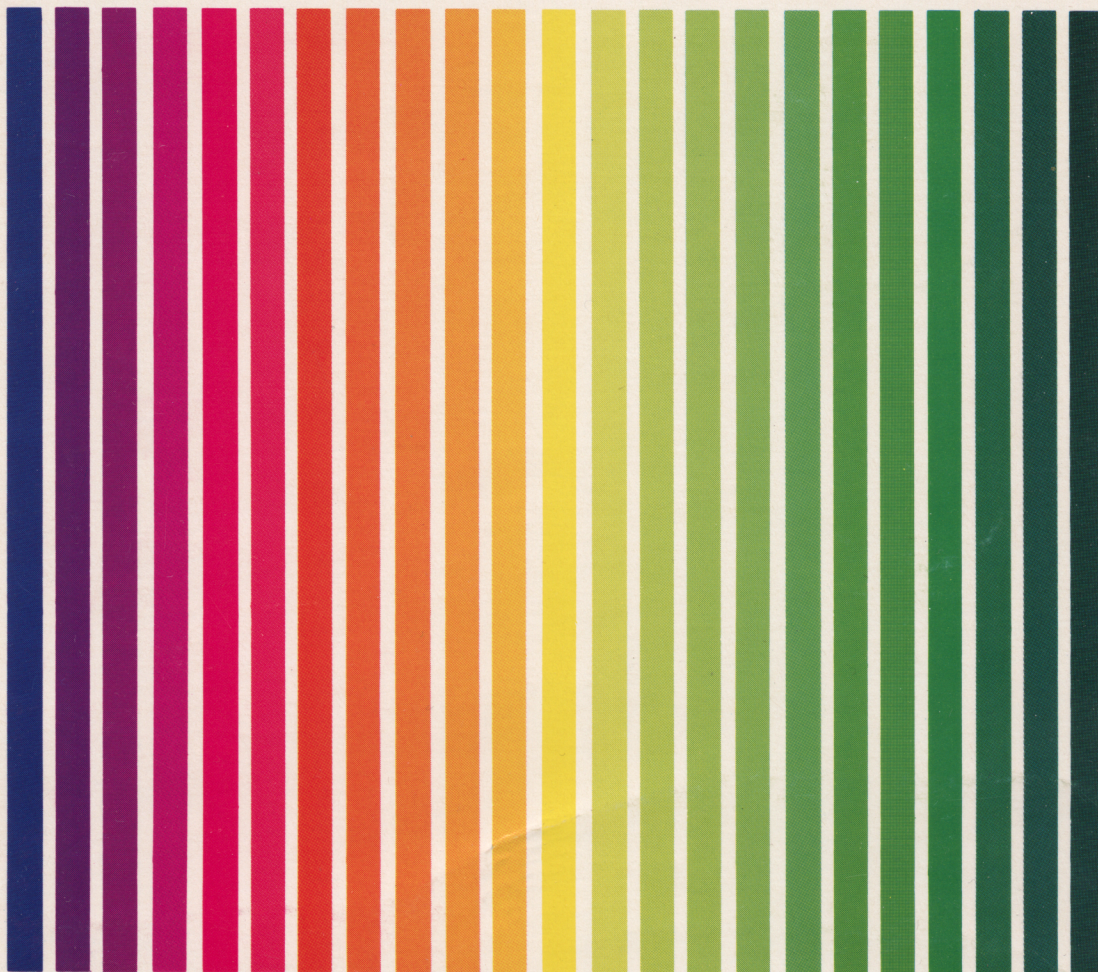# APX
ATARI® PROGRAM EXCHANGE

Stephen Romejko
MELT-DOWN™
Fill a leaking reactor before it melts

Cassette: 16K (APX-10178)   Diskette: 32K (APX-20178)

User-Written Software for ATARI Home Computers

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MELT-DOWN™
Fill a leaking reactor before it melts

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MELT-DOWN^{tm}

by

Stephen Romejko

Program and Manual Contents©1982 Stephen Romejko

Distributed By

The ATARI Program Exchange
P.O. Box 3705
Santa Clara, CA 95055

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

MELT-DOWN[*] is a challenging maze chase game. You're a night watchman alone in a small-town nuclear power plant. You discover a leak in the cooling tower. You're faced with maintaining a "safe" water level in the tower to prevent a nuclear disaster. You maintain this level by carrying buckets of water and depositing them into the top of the tower. Meanwhile, the leak in the tower has caused radioactive water to run off into a nearby reservoir. You use the red joystick button to jump over various species of mice that have been adversely affected by the contaminated water.

You score bonus points whenever you succesfully jump over mice or dump a bucketful of water into the tower. You earn a super bonus if you refill the tower, repairing the leak. Skill levels determine the speed of the action, the size of the mice, and the bonus points scored. You may compete against your own high score or against another player.

REQUIRED ACCESSORIES

One ATARI Joystick Controller per player

Cassette version

16K RAM
ATARI 410 Program Recorder

Diskette version

32K RAM
ATARI 810 Disk Drive

CONTACTING THE AUTHOR

Users wishing to contact the author about MELT-DOWN may write to him at:

Constitution Drive
Lanesboro, MA 01237

*MELT-DOWM is a trademark of Stephen Remejko.

GETTING STARTED

LOADING MELT-DOWN INTO COMPUTER MEMORY

1. Remove any program cartridge from the (left) cartridge slot of your computer.

2. For a one-player game, plug your Joystick Controller into the first (the leftmost) controller jack at the front of your computer console. For a two-player game, plug a second Joystick Controller into the second controller jack. Hold the joystick so that the red button is at your upper left.

3. If you have the cassette version of MELT-DOWN:

   a. Have your computer turned OFF.

   b. Insert the MELT-DOWN cassette into the program recorder's cassette holder and press REWIND on the recorder until the tape rewinds completely. Then press PLAY to prepare the program recorder for loading the program.

   c. Turn on the computer while holding down the START key.

   d. When you hear a beep, release the START key and press the RETURN key. The program will load into computer memory and start automatically.

If you have the diskette version of MELT-DOWN:

   a. Have your computer turned OFF.

   b. Turn on your disk drive.

   c. When the BUSY light goes out, open the disk drive door and insert the MELT-DOWN diskette with the label in the lower right-hand corner nearest to you. (Use disk drive one if you have more than one drive.)

   d. Turn on your computer and your TV set. The program will load into computer memory and start automatically.

THE FIRST DISPLAY SCREEN

The game title, MELT-DOWN, and a copyright notice display briefly, followed by a screen describing the game options.

GAME OPTIONS AND VARIATIONS

THE SELECT KEY -- number of players

> Press the SELECT key to change from a one-player game to a two-player game. Press the SELECT key a second time to return to a one-player game.

THE OPTION KEY -- skill level

> Press the OPTION key to change the skill level of the game. Level 1 is the least difficult and level 4 is the most difficult.

THE START KEY -- begin play

> Press the START key to begin the game or to restart the game at any time while it's in progress. The red trigger button on joystick 1 will also start play, but it won't interrupt a game in progress.

THE SYSTEM RESET KEY

> You can press the SYSTEM RESET key at any time to reset the game. When you use SYSTEM RESET, you automatically select a one-player game with difficulty level 1.

SPACE BAR -- pauses the game

> Press the SPACE BAR to suspend game play. Press it again to continue the play. This feature is particulary useful if the phone rings while you're in the middle of a record game.

THE HIGH SCORE

> The HIGH SCORE displays on the selection display until you turn off the computer. <u>Note.</u> If you use the START key to begin a new game before completing the current game, you might lose a potentially new high score.

PLAYING MELT-DOWN

OBJECTIVE

Once you've started the game (either by pressing the START key or the red button on joystick 1), the screen changes to the action display. Your man is positioned at the bottom center of the screen, in the basement of one of the two buildings at the perimeter of the cooling tower. Your bucket is under the faucet ready to be filled with water. Your goal is to fill your bucket with water and safely tote it to the roof of either building and deposit its contents into the cooling tower. You must be positioned at the edge of either roof or anywhere on the guide wire connecting the buildings (indicated by a single red line on the screen) to ensure that your water is deposited in the tower. To fill your bucket, you must be positioned near the sink but not blocking it from view. Hint. You don't have to be facing the sink to fill your bucket but you must be close to it. Next, give the joystick a slight downward flick and your bucket will be filled (see "Game Rules and Moves/Actions" for more information).

ACTION DISPLAY

The playing field is shown in Figure 1. The major items on the display are:

1. The cooling tower - this is where you deposit your water.

2. The sink - located in the basement, it is the only place where you can fill or refill your bucket.

3. The stairways - the stairways are the only places where you can change floors.

4. The red bar graph - this indicator shows the water level in the cooling tower. Returning this indicator to the full (start) position results in a full tower and, you guessed it, a new leak. Allowing this indicator to reach the bottom of the critical stage results in MELT-DOWN and the total destruction of you, your place of employment, and the surrounding area.

5. The blue bar graph - this indicator shows the level of radioactivity in the nearby reservoir from which the mice are quenching their thirst. It, therefore, dictates the speed of the game and the size of the mice.

6. The LEVEL - this indicator shows the level of radioactivity in your body. This level increases every time you come in contact with a radioactive mouse. It ranges from a minimum of zero to a maximum of five. At levels 0-4 you still have the strength and ability to jump over the mice safely. However, should your radioactivity level reach 5, you'll be too weak to jump over the mice. If you come in contact with a mouse when your radioactivity level is 5, you'll be too weak to ·

4

FIGURE 1 - ACTION DISPLAY

5. RADIOACTIVITY CONTENT OF RESERVOIR

4. WATER LEVEL IN TOWER

CRITICAL   DANGER   ALERT   NORMAL

DUMPING ZONE

3. STAIRWAY

WALKWAYS

1. COOLING TOWER

2. SINK

FILL-UP AREA

NIGHT WATCHMAN

6. YOUR RADIOACTIVITY LEVEL

LEVEL: 00

SCORE: 025400

YOUR SCORE

PLAYER: 01

PLAYER UP
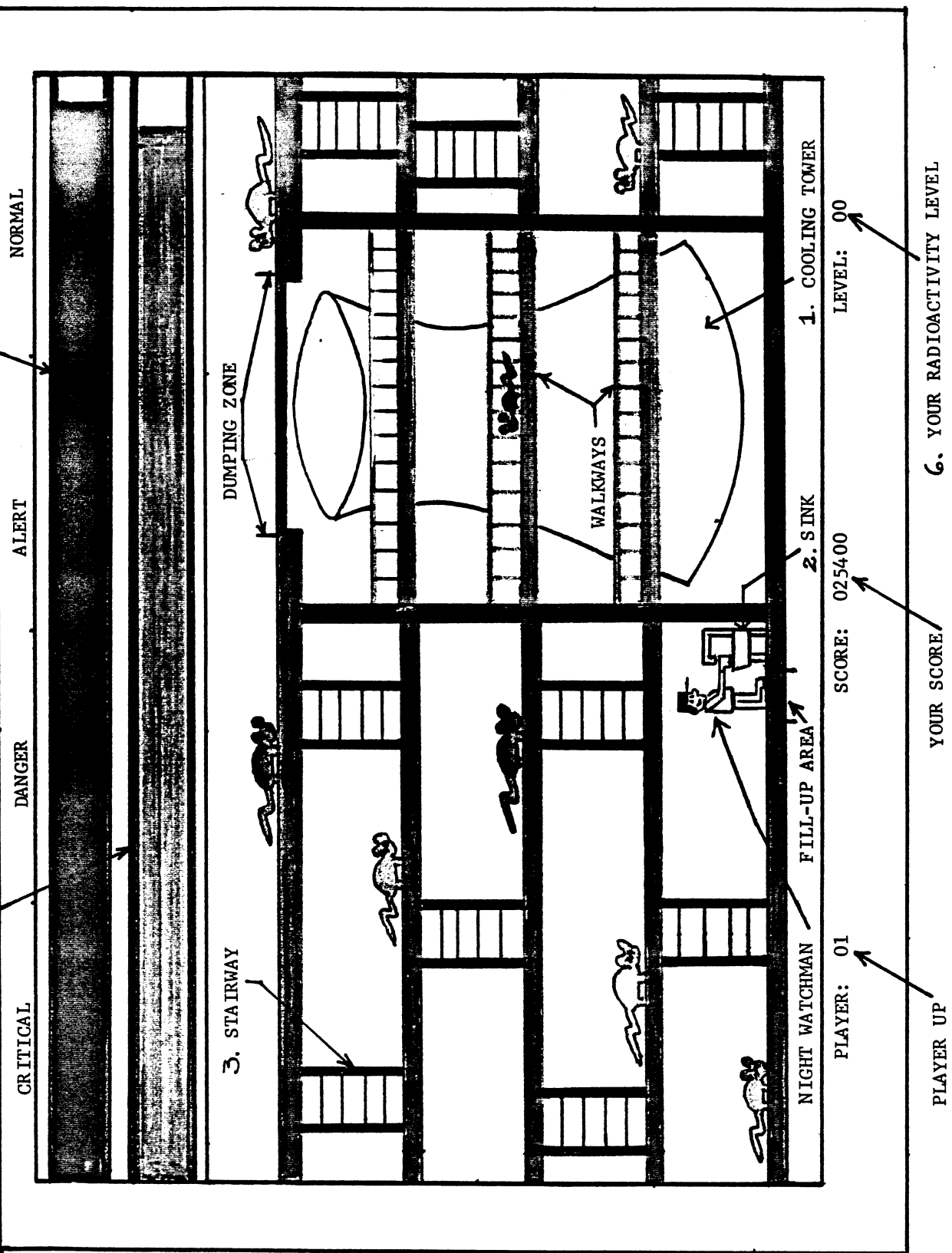
move but, alas, the end will come quickly.

GAME RULES AND MOVES/ACTIONS

The controller

The functions of your joystick and the red trigger button are summarized in Figure 2.

```
jump -> X        upstairs

                    ^
                    |
                    |
      left <-- * --> right
                    |
                    |
                    V


              downstairs
              fill bucket
              empty bucket
```
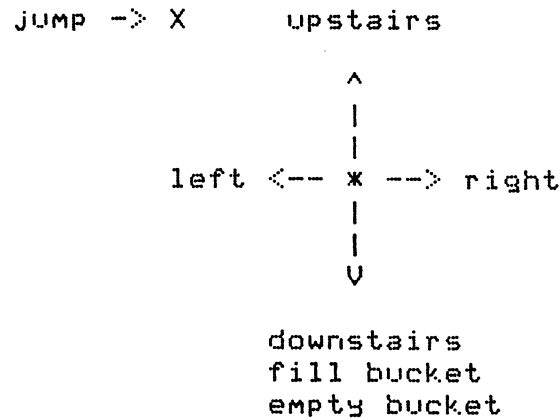
Figure 2.   Joystick functions

However, some explanation is necessary. As you can see, moving the joystick towards you serves three functions:

(1) When you're positioned near the sink (as you are at the start of each game and any time the action stops due to a collision or a full tower), moving the joystick down fills your bucket. If you're successful, you hear a glug-glug-glug (with sounds getting higher each time to indicate that your bucket is filling up) and your player turns blue.

(2) To dump the water, again, move the joystick toward you. This time the glug-glug-glug gets lower in frequency and you see the water spill out of your bucket. Your player will then return to his/her original color (player 1 is orange, player 2 is green). Warning. When filling your bucket at the sink, be careful not to overfill your bucket by holding the joystick down too long. Overfilling results only in wet feet and an empty bucket.

(3) Moving the joystick toward you also moves your player down the stairways.

Jumping. You can jump either of two ways.

(1) If you push the red button without applying "English" with your joystick, your player jumps straight up. This is useful in the faster skill levels of the game.

(2) If you push the button while moving left or right, you get extra distance on your jump. This is necessary during slower play. This maneuver requires a little practice, but soon becomes second nature.

FILLING THE TOWER

Successfully filling the tower earns you a hefty bonus (see "Scoring"). In addition, since you will have had some time to recover between tower leaks, the radioactivity level in your body returns to zero. This is particularly useful if your level has reached 5 and you have lost your jumping ability.

SCORING

The current player, score, and radioactivity level display at the bottom of the action display, as shown in Figure 1. You earn points as follows:

Jumping small mice	100 points
Jumping large mice	200 points
Putting water into the tower	1000-5000 points*
Filling the tower	5000 points

----

*Depends on level of radioactivity of the reservoir water (normal – 1000 pts., alert – 2000 pts., danger – 3000 pts., critical – 4000 pts., and hopeless – 5000 pts.)

The same scoring scheme is used for all cooling tower leaks. However, since the radioactivity level of the reservoir usually increases from the first leak, bonus points for subsequent leaks are usually higher.

SUGGESTED STRATEGY AND HELPFUL HINTS

If you're new to MELT-DOWN, here's a simple strategy to follow:

(1) When the READY indication appears on the display, hold the joystick toward you. When it disappears (and is replaced by the blue bar graph), you'll hear your bucket being filled (you will not have turned blue yet). At this time, release your joystick to avoid overfilling your bucket.

(2) Use your discretion when jumping over mice. When they're small and slow moving, they're easy to jump but you must use the extra distance feature (see "Game Rules and Moves/Actions"). When they first get large (skill level 3), the green and blue mice are particularly difficult to jump. Avoid these mice until you become a skilled mouse leaper. Also, as a beginner, it's usually easier to stop just before a mouse reaches you and prepare yourself for the jump. This way you won't run into the mouse before jumping.

(3) During the slower segments of the game (levels 1-2), use the stairways in the left-hand building as your path to the roof, because it will be a shorter route. As the game speeds up (levels 3, 4 and hyperspeed), use all the stairways to avoid waiting for mice to pass above or below you. You'll lose valuable seconds if you don't choose the correct stairway, since the tower leaks faster as the game progresses.

SUMMARY OF USEFUL INFORMATION

Table A. Melt-Down Strategy Information

Difficulty level	1	2	3	4	hyperspeed
Bucket capacity (gallons)	1600	2600	4000	5600	6400
Leakage rate (gallons/second)	100	120	167	275	375
Watchman's speed (feet/second)	20	20	30	30	60
Red River mice (feet/second)	20	30	30	60	60
Yellow Slicker mice (feet/second)	15	20	30	30	60
Purple Valley mice (feet/second)	12	15	20	30	30
Blue Jean mice (feet/second)	10	12	15	20	30
Green Mountain mice (feet/second)	8	10	12	15	20
Watchman's hang time (seconds)	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.30
Size of mice	SMALL	SMALL	LARGE	LARGE	LARGE
Bonus (water into tower)	1000	2000	3000	4000	5000

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Review Form

We're interested in your experiences with APX programs and documentation, both favorable and unfavorable. Many of our authors are eager to improve their programs if they know what you want. And, of course, we want to know about any bugs that slipped by us, so that the author can fix them. We also want to know whether our instructions are meeting your needs. You are our best source for suggesting improvements! Please help us by taking a moment to fill in this review sheet. Fold the sheet in thirds and seal it so that the address on the bottom of the back becomes the envelope front. Thank you for helping us!

1. Name and APX number of program.

_____

_____

2. If you have problems using the program, please describe them here.

_____

_____

_____

3. What do you especially like about this program?

_____

_____

_____

4. What do you think the program's weaknesses are?

_____

_____

_____

5. How can the catalog description be more accurate or comprehensive?

_____

_____

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent", please rate the following aspects of this program:

_____ Easy to use
_____ User-oriented (e.g., menus, prompts, clear language)
_____ Enjoyable
_____ Self-instructive
_____ Useful (non-game programs)
_____ Imaginative graphics and sound

7. Describe any technical errors you found in the user instructions (please give page numbers).

_____

_____

_____

8. What did you especially like about the user instructions?

_____

_____

_____

9. What revisions or additions would improve these instructions?

_____

_____

_____

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 representing "poor" and 10 representing "excellent", how would you rate the user instructions and why?

_____

_____

11. Other comments about the program or user instructions:

_____

_____

_____

From

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