

No. 93-144
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Wednesday, September 29, 1993)

NRC STAFF TO ADVISE UTILITIES OF CRACKS
FOUND IN NORTH CAROLINA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will send an advisory to utility operators of General Electric Boiling Water reactors alerting them to cracks which have been found in the weld regions of the core support shroud of Unit 1 at Carolina Power and Light Company's Brunswick nuclear power plant near Southport, North Carolina.

The staff expects that the individual utilities will review the information provided for applicability to their nuclear power plants and consider actions, as appropriate, to avoid similar problems.

The core shroud is a stainless steel cylinder located inside of the reactor pressure vessel which directs cooling water around the nuclear fuel. Carolina Power and Light has announced plans to repair the cracks before the unit is returned to service.

In the case of Brunswick Unit 1, which has been shut down since April of 1992, the cracks pose no immediate safety concern. However, if a reactor were operating and an unlikely event such as a steam line break occurred, a cracked shroud could shift possibly impacting on the proper operation of the reactor control rods.

The cracks in the Brunswick facility were discovered and reported to the NRC staff in July. They are believed to be caused by intergranular stress corrosion; however, their exact size and nature still are being assessed. It is the first case of core-shroud cracking reported in this country and the NRC staff will be considering its possible generic implications for other boiling water reactors.

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