May 9, 2000

Mr. William T. Cottle
President and Chief Executive Officer
STP Nuclear Operating Company
South Texas Project Electric
Generating Station
P. O. Box 289
Wadsworth, TX 77483

SUBJECT: SOUTH TEXAS PROJECT, UNITS 1 AND 2 - NEW CRITERIA FOR WELD WIDTH IN WESTINGHOUSE STEAM GENERATOR TUBE LASER WELDED SLEEVES REPAIR METHODOLOGY (TAC NOS. MA3946 AND MA3947)

Dear Mr. Cottle:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had approved the installation of laser welded sleeves, using the Westinghouse repair methodology, as an alternative to plugging defective steam generator (SG) tubes at South Texas Project (STP), Units 1 and 2, in amendments 90 and 77, respectively. After the NRC had approved the use of this alternative, Westinghouse identified an issue with the methodology related to the width of the welds. The NRC and Westinghouse have agreed on a resolution to this issue. In a letter dated April 27, 2000, STP Nuclear Operating Company (STPNOC) committed to implement Westinghouse's resolution to this issue concerning the acceptable width for laser welded sleeves used in the repair of SG tubes.

In the resolution, Westinghouse modified the recommended inspection procedure for future welds to include a criterion that establishes the minimum average width of each weld in order to meet the requirements of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Section III Code for design-by-analysis. Any welds determined to have an average width of less than 21 mils is required to have an engineering evaluation to determine its adequacy. The engineering evaluation is limited to infrequently accepting welds with widths of not less than 19 mils.

It is the NRC's understanding that you have replaced the STP Unit 1 SGs and amended the Unit 1 Technical Specifications (amendment 107, issued April 19, 1999, implemented April 25, 2000) such that the laser welded sleeve option no longer applies. As such, this repair option applies only to the Unit 2 SGs that are scheduled to be replaced in the fall of 2002. Further, it was noted in the April 27, 2000, letter that there are no laser welded sleeves installed in the Unit 2 SGs and that if STPNOC were to use this repair methodology at STP Unit 2, the laser welded sleeves will be installed in conformance with the criteria established by Westinghouse.

Your commitment to implement the recommendations made by Westinghouse to resolve the issue with the width of the welds used in the laser welded sleeve repair methodology provides the NRC with reasonable assurance that SG tube integrity will be maintained should this methodology be used on the Unit 2 SGs. If you have questions regarding this issue, please contact me at 301-415-1278. This completes the NRC review of this issue for STP, Units 1 and 2, and closes TAC Nos. MA3946 and MA3947.

Sincerely,
/RA/
John A. Nakoski, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate IV & Decommissioning
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-498 and 50-499

cc: See next page

Your commitment to implement the recommendations made by Westinghouse to resolve the issue with the width of the welds used in the laser welded sleeve repair methodology provides the NRC with reasonable assurance that SG tube integrity will be maintained should this methodology be used on the Unit 2 SGs. If you have questions regarding this issue, please contact me at 301-415-1278. This completes the NRC review of this issue for STP, Units 1 and 2, and closes TAC Nos. MA3946 and MA3947.

Sincerely,
/RA/
John A. Nakoski, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
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Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-498 and 50-499

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