August 30, 2000

Mr. Ronald DeGregorio
Vice President Oyster Creek
AmerGen Energy Company, LLC
P.O. Box 388
Forked River, NJ 08731

SUBJECT: SAFETY EVALUATION OF THE REQUEST FOR RELIEF FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS BOILER AND PRESSURE VESSEL CODE (ASME CODE) SECTION XI REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONTAINMENT INSERVICE INSPECTION PROGRAM, OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION (TAC NO. MA7853)

Dear Mr. DeGregorio:

By letter dated December 17, 1999, you submitted Relief Request (R-19) concerning the containment examination requirements for the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station Containment Inservice Inspection (ISI) Program. You requested approval for the use of alternative inspection to support the preparation for scheduled ISI activities during the 2000 refueling outage. We have reviewed your request, and, based on the information provided, we conclude that the alternatives you have proposed will provide an acceptable level of quality and safety. Therefore, the proposed alternatives are authorized pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(a)(3)(i) for the first interval of the IWE Containment Inservice Inspection Program.

On the date of the December 17, 1999, application, GPU Nuclear, Inc. (GPUN) was the licensed operator for Oyster Creek. On August 8, 2000, GPUN's ownership interest in Oyster Creek was transferred to AmerGen Energy Company, LLC (AmerGen). By letter dated August 10, 2000, AmerGen Energy requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission continue to review and act upon all requests before the Commission which had been submitted by GPUN. Accordingly, the staff has completed its review of the requested relief request.

Our detailed evaluation and conclusions are documented in the enclosed safety evaluation.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Marsha Gamberoni, Chief, Section 1
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-219

Enclosure: Safety Evaluation

cc w/encl: See next page

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SAFETY EVALUATION BY THE OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION

RELATED TO THE 10-YEAR INSERVICE INSPECTION

PROGRAM RELIEF REQUEST R-19

OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

DOCKET NO. 50-219

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the Federal Register dated August 8, 1996 (61 FR 41303), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) amended its regulations, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a, to incorporate by reference the 1992 Edition with 1992 Addenda of Subsections IWE and IWL of Section XI of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code (ASME Code). Subsections IWE and IWL provide the requirements for inservice inspection (ISI) of Class CC (concrete containment), and Class MC (metallic containment) of light-water cooled nuclear power plants. The effective date for the amended rule was September 9, 1996, and it requires the licensees to incorporate the new requirements into their ISI plans and to complete the first containment inspection by September 9, 2001. However, a licensee may propose alternatives to or submit a request for relief from the requirements of the regulation pursuant to Section 50.55a(a)(3) or (g)(5) of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations (10 CFR), respectively.

By letter dated December 17, 1999, GPU Nuclear, Inc. (GPUN), the licensee, proposed several alternatives to the requirements of Subsections IWE and IWL of Section XI of the ASME Code for its Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station (Oyster Creek). The NRC's findings with respect to authorizing the alternatives or denying the proposed request is discussed in this evaluation.

On the date of the December 17, 1999, application, GPU Nuclear, Inc. (GPUN) was the licensed operator for Oyster Creek. On August 8, 2000, GPUN's ownership interest in Oyster Creek was transferred to AmerGen Energy Company, LLC (AmerGen). By letter dated August 10, 2000, AmerGen Energy requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission continue to review and act upon all requests before the Commission which had been submitted by GPUN. Accordingly, the staff has completed its review of the requested relief request.

Enclosure

2.0 EVALUATION

2.1 Relief Request No. 19 - Containment Inspection of New Paint or Coatings

2.1.1 Code Requirements

ASME Section XI, 1992 Edition, 1992 Addenda, Subsection IWE, Subarticle IWE-2200(g) requires that when paint or coatings are reapplied, the condition of the new paint or coating shall be documented in the preservice examination records.

2.1.2 Specific Relief Requested

Relief is requested from the Code required preservice inspection of reapplied paint and coatings on all IWE Class MC components.

2.1.3 Licensee's Basis for Relief

The licensee states that:

> Pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(a)(3)(i), relief is requested for Oyster Creek on the basis that the proposed alternative provisions to the ASME Section XI Code requirements would provide an acceptable level of quality and safety.
>
> 10 CFR 50.55a was amended in the Federal Register to require the use of the 1992 Edition, 1992 Addenda, Section XI when performing containment inspections. Subarticle IWE-2200(g) requires that when paint or coatings are reapplied, a preservice inspection is performed and documented in the preservice inspection records.
>
> Paint and coatings are not part of the containment pressure boundary under current Code rules, because they are not associated with the pressure boundary function of the component (Paragraph NE-2110(b) of Section III). Neither paint nor coatings contribute to the structural integrity or leak tightness of the containment, although degradation of the coating may be symptomatic of plate deterioration. Furthermore, the paint and coatings on the containment pressure boundary were not subject to ASME Section XI rules for repair or replacement in accordance with IWA-4111(b)(5) during original application. The adequacy of the applied coatings is verified through the inspections performed by the Quality Verification group through the implementation of the maintenance program and the GPU Nuclear Operational Quality Assurance (OQA) Plan.
>
> The Maintenance and Quality Assurance programs for paint and protective coatings include planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that shop or field coating work will perform satisfactorily in service.
>
> The Maintenance and Quality Assurance programs are applied to protective coatings consistent with the nature and scope of work specified in the Technical Specifications. The following elements are included:

1. Preparation of coating specifications/procedures;
2. Review of coating manufacturers test data;
3. Review of manufacturers identification, control, storage, handling, surface preparation, application, curing and inspection;
4. Training and qualification of inspection and applicator personnel;
5. Supplier surveillance inspection.

Recording the condition of reapplied coating in the preservice record does not substantiate the containment structural integrity. Should deterioration of the coating in the reapplied area occur, the area would require additional evaluation regardless of the preservice record. Recording the condition of the new coating in the preservice records is a burden without a compensating increase in the level of quality and safety of the containment.

In SECY 96-080, Issuance of final amendment to 10 CFR 50.55a to incorporate by reference the ASME Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code, Section XI, Division I, Subsection IWE and IWL, dated April 16, 1996, response to comment 3.2 about IWE-2200(g) states, "In the NRC's opinion, this does not mean that a visual examination must be performed with every coating application. A visual examination of the topcoat to determine the soundness and the condition of the topcoat should be sufficient." This is currently accomplished through inspections directed by Maintenance procedures.

In addition, the requirement to perform a preservice examination when paint or coatings are reapplied has been removed in the rewrite of Subsection IWE of ASME Section XI.

2.1.4 Alternative Examinations

Reapplied paint and coatings on the containment vessel's interior surfaces will be examined in accordance with the Maintenance program and the GPU Nuclear [the licensee or AmerGen] OQA plan, as stated by GPU in response to NRC Generic Letter (GL) 98-04, “Potential for Degradation of the Emergency Core Cooling System and the Containment Spray System after a Loss-of-Coolant Accident Because of Construction and Protective Coating Deficiencies and Foreign Material in Containment,” GPU Letter 1940-98-20665 dated November 11, 1998. This relief is requested for the first inspection interval for containment inspections.

2.1.5 Staff Evaluation of Relief Request R-19

In lieu of meeting the ASME Section XI, 1992 Edition, 1992 Addenda, Subsection IWE-2200(g) requirements to perform a preservice inspection of new paint or coatings, the licensee proposed to examine the paint and coatings in accordance with the maintenance program and GPU’s Nuclear [the licensee’s or AmerGen’s] OQA plan. According to the licensee, the coating program requirement for performing examination meets the guidance of NRC GL 98-04. The licensee also stated that the area would require additional evaluation regardless of the preservice record, if deterioration of the coating in the reapplied area occurs. In addition, the licensee, in the “Basis for Relief” section, provided a description of program elements of the maintenance and QA programs, and stated that these two programs are applied to protective coatings consistent with the nature and scope of work specified in the Technical Specifications.

The staff finds that recording the condition of reapplied coating in the preservice record does not substantiate the containment structural integrity. The staff also finds that in SECY 96-080, the staff's response to comment 3.2 regarding IWE-2200(g) states, "In the NRC's opinion, this does not mean that a visual examination must be performed with every coating application. A visual examination of the topcoat to determine the soundness and the condition of the topcoat should be sufficient."

3.0 CONCLUSION

On the basis discussed above, the NRC staff finds that the alternative proposed by the licensee will provide reasonable assurance of the containment integrity. Therefore, the request for relief is authorized pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(a)(3)(i) on the basis that the alternative provides an acceptable level of quality and safety.

Principal Contributor: T. Cheng

Date: August 30, 2000

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