

December 23, 2002

Mr. J. B. Beasley
Vice President - Farley Project
Southern Nuclear Operating
Company, Inc.
Post Office Box 1295
Birmingham, Alabama 35201-1295

SUBJECT: JOSEPH M. FARLEY NUCLEAR PLANT, UNIT 2 - RESPONSE TO NRC
BULLETIN 2002-02, "REACTOR PRESSURE VESSEL HEAD AND VESSEL
HEAD PENETRATION NOZZLE INSPECTION PROGRAMS" (TAC NO.
MB5892)

Dear Mr. Beasley:

On August 9, 2002, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued Bulletin 2002-02, "Reactor Pressure Vessel Head and Vessel Head Penetration Nozzle Inspection Programs." The Bulletin requested addressees to provide information related to their reactor pressure vessel (RPV) head and vessel head penetration (VHP) nozzle inspection programs for their respective facilities, including a summary discussion of inspection program plans to supplement their required visual inspections with non-visual nondestructive examination methods, or justification for reliance on visual examinations as the primary method to detect degradation. Addressees were requested to respond to Item (1) of the Bulletin within 30 days of its issuance, or within 15 days of its issuance, to provide an alternative course of action, including the basis for acceptability of the proposed action.

By letter dated September 9, 2002, Southern Nuclear Operating Company provided a response to Item (1) of the Bulletin, indicating the plans to perform RPV head and VHP nozzle inspections at Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant, Unit 2 (FNP-2). The response also indicated that FNP-2 is in the category of plants considered to have high susceptibility to RPV head and VHP cracking, based on a susceptibility ranking of greater than 12 effective degradation years. In a supplemental letter dated October 4, 2002, you addressed the impact of recent industry inspection findings on your inspection plans provided in response to Item (1).

The NRC staff has reviewed your response to Item (1) of the Bulletin and the October 4, 2002, supplement in which you committed to perform bare metal visual examination of the RPV head and volumetric nondestructive examination (NDE) of all of the VHP nozzles during the Fall 2002 refueling outage for FNP-2. The NRC staff finds the combination of NDE methods performed for this refueling outage is sufficient to demonstrate compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and adequate to provide reasonable assurance of the public health and safety, if implemented properly with qualified and demonstrated equipment, personnel, and procedures.

The NRC staff notes that your justification for reliance on visual examinations and long-term inspection plans refer to the Electric Power Research Institute Materials Reliability Program (MRP) report MRP-75, "PWR Reactor Pressure Vessel (RPV) Upper Head Penetrations Inspection Plan." The NRC staff has not completed its review of the MRP inspection plan and, as such, has not made a determination on the adequacy of the program for ensuring compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and protection of public health and safety.

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The NRC staff's assessment of your justification and the adequacy of your long-term inspection program plans will be determined upon completion of the NRC staff's review of the MRP proposed inspection plan. Once completed, the NRC staff will initiate further discussions with you as warranted.

Please note that you are requested to inform the NRC staff in writing within 90 days of implementation should your future inspection plans change.

Please contact me at (301) 415-1447, if you have any questions on this issue.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Frank Rinaldi, Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-364

cc: See next page

with applicable regulatory requirements and protection of public health and safety. The NRC staff's assessment of your justification and the adequacy of your long-term inspection program plans will be determined upon completion of the NRC staff's review of the MRP proposed inspection plan. Once completed, the NRC staff will initiate further discussions with you as warranted.

Please note that you are requested to inform the NRC staff in writing within 90 days of implementation should your future inspection plans change.

Please contact me at (301) 415-1447, if you have any questions on this issue.

Sincerely,

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Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant

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