

December 26, 2002

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 - RESPONSE TO NRC BULLETIN 2002-02, "REACTOR PRESSURE VESSEL HEAD AND VESSEL HEAD PENETRATION NOZZLE INSPECTION PROGRAMS" (TAC NOS. MB5926 AND MB5927)

Dear Mr. Cottle:

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 to provide an alternative course of action, including the basis for acceptability of the proposed action, within 15 days of its issuance.

By letter dated September 11, 2002, STP Nuclear Operating Company provided a response to Item (1) of the Bulletin, indicating the plans to perform RPV head and VHP nozzle inspections at South Texas Project (STP), Units 1 and 2. The response also indicated that STP, Units 1 and 2 are in the category of plants considered to have low susceptibility to RPV head and VHP cracking, based on a susceptibility ranking of less than eight effective degradation years.

The NRC staff has reviewed your response to Item (1) of the Bulletin. The staff finds your 100 percent bare metal visual examination during the refueling outage of Unit 2 in October 2002, and the immediate inspection plan to perform a 100 percent bare metal visual examination during the forthcoming refueling outage of Unit 1 starting in March 2003, provides reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety.

The 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) inspection plan for pressurized water reactor RPV upper head penetrations and will comply with its requirements for conduct of bare metal visual examination. The 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 that the applicable regulatory requirements are

W. Cottle

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met. The staff's assessment of your justification and the adequacy of your long-term inspection program plans will be determined upon completion of the staff's review of the MRP proposed inspection plan.

Also, please note that as stated in Item (2) of the Bulletin, you are to report to the Commission your inspection scope and results within 30 days after plant restart following the inspection of the RPV head and VHP nozzles.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-1476.

Sincerely,

/RA by R. A. Gramm for/

Mohan C. Thadani, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate IV
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos.: 50-498 and 50-499

cc: See next page

South Texas, Units 1 & 2

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Also, please note that as stated in Item (2) of the Bulletin, you are to report to the Commission your inspection scope and results within 30 days after plant restart following the inspection of the RPV head and VHP nozzles.

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