

December 10, 2003

Mr. W. R. McCollum, Jr.
Senior Vice President
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Duke Energy Corporation
526 South Church St
Charlotte, NC 28201

SUBJECT: OCONEE NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1, 2 AND 3; MCGUIRE NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2; AND CATAWBA NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2, RE: SAFETY EVALUATION OF RELIEF REQUEST NO. 03-GO-009: QUALIFICATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE OF ULTRASONIC EXAMINATIONS (TAC NOS. MB9997, MB9998, MB9915, MB9916, MB9917, MB9918, AND MB9919)

Dear Mr. McCollum:

In its letter dated July 1, 2003, Duke Energy Corporation, the licensee for the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3; McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2; and Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, submitted the subject relief request for Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff approval.

The NRC staff has reviewed the Relief Request Serial No. 03-GO-009. The licensee requests relief from the requirements in ASME Code, Section XI, for the qualification of personnel, procedures and equipment used to ultrasonically examine Category B-F and Category C-F Pressure Retaining Dissimilar Metal piping welds. Based on a review of the information provided in the request for relief, the NRC staff concludes that the licensee's proposed alternatives will provide an acceptable level of quality and safety. Pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Section 50.55.a(a)(3)(i), the NRC staff authorizes the use of the proposed alternative. The NRC staff's Safety Evaluation is enclosed.

Sincerely,

/RA/

John A. Nakoski, Chief, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-269, 50-270, and 50-287; 50-369 and 50-370; 50-413 and 50-414

Enclosure: As stated

cc w/encl: See next page

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SAFETY EVALUATION BY THE OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
OF RELIEF REQUESTS FROM ASME SECTION XI REQUIREMENTS
REQUEST FOR RELIEF 03-GO-009
FOR DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION 'S
OCONEE NUCLEAR STATION UNITS 1, 2 AND 3
MCGUIRE NUCLEAR STATION UNITS 1 AND 2
CATAWBA NUCLEAR STATION UNITS 1 AND 2
DOCKET NOS. 50-269, 50-270, AND 50-287; 50-369 AND 50-370; 50-413 AND 50-414

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The inservice inspection (ISI) of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code (Code) Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 components is to be performed in accordance with Section XI of the ASME Code, and the applicable edition and addenda as required by Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Section 50.55a(g), except where specific written relief has been granted by the Commission pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(i). 10 CFR 50.55a(a)(3) states in part that alternatives to the requirements of paragraph (g) may be used, when authorized by the NRC, if the licensee demonstrates that: (i) the proposed alternatives would provide an acceptable level of quality and safety, or (ii) compliance with the specified requirements would result in hardship or unusual difficulty without a compensating increase in the level of quality and safety.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(4), ASME Code Class 1, 2, and 3 components (including supports) shall meet the requirements, except the design and access provisions and the pre-service examination requirements, set forth in the ASME Code, Section XI, "Rules for Inservice Inspection (ISI) of Nuclear Power Plant Components," to the extent practical within the limitations of design, geometry, and materials of construction of the components. The regulations require that inservice examination of components and system pressure tests conducted during the first 10-year interval and subsequent intervals comply with the requirements in the latest edition and addenda of Section XI of the ASME Code incorporated by reference in 10 CFR 50.55a(b) 12 months prior to the start of the 120-month interval, subject to the limitations and modifications listed therein. The ISI Code of record for McGuire Nuclear Station Unit 1, is the 1995 Edition through the 1996 Addenda. The Code of record for McGuire Nuclear Station, Unit 2, Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, and Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3 is the 1989 Edition. The components (including supports) may meet the requirements set forth in subsequent editions and addenda of the ASME Code incorporated by reference in 10 CFR 50.55a(b) subject to the limitations and modifications listed therein and subject to Commission approval.

By letter dated July 1, 2003, Duke Energy Corporation (the licensee) proposed alternatives under the provisions of 10 CFR 50.55a(a)(3)(i) to the requirements of Section XI of the ASME Code (Relief Request Serial No. 03-GO-009) for its Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3; McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2; Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2. Specifically, the licensee proposed using the Dissimilar Metal Weld (DMW) criteria of the Electric Power

ENCLOSURE

Research Institute (EPRI)-Performance Demonstration Initiative Program (PDI) in lieu of select provisions of the ASME Code, Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10.

2.0 DISCUSSION

2.1 Components For Which Relief Is Requested

Category B-F and Category C-F pressure retaining dissimilar metal piping welds subject to examinations using procedures, personnel and equipment qualified to the 1995 Edition, 1996 Addenda of the ASME Code Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10, "Qualification Requirements for Dissimilar Metal Piping Welds."

2.2 Code Requirements

The licensee requests relief from the following ASME Code Supplement 10 requirements:

Item 1 - Paragraph 1.1(b) states in part - Pipe diameters within a range of 0.9 to 1.5 times a nominal diameter shall be considered equivalent.

Item 2 - Paragraph 1.1(d) states - All flaws in the specimen set shall be cracks.

Item 3 - Paragraph 1.1(d)(1) states - At least 50% of the cracks shall be in austenitic material. At least 50% of the cracks in austenitic material shall be contained wholly in weld or buttering material. At least 10% of the cracks shall be in ferritic material. The remainder of the cracks may be in either austenitic or ferritic material.

Item 4 - Paragraph 1.2(b) states in part - The number of unflawed grading units shall be at least twice the number of flawed grading units.

Item 5 - Paragraph 1.2(c)(1) and 1.3(c) state in part - At least 1/3 of the flaws, rounded to the next higher whole number, shall have depths between 10% and 30% of the nominal pipe wall thickness. Paragraph 1.4(b) distribution table requires 20% of the flaws to have depths between 10% and 30%.

Item 6 - Paragraph 2.0 first sentence states - The specimen inside surface and identification shall be concealed from the candidate.

Item 7 - Paragraph 2.2(b) states in part - The regions containing a flaw to be sized shall be identified to the candidate.

Item 8 - Paragraph 2.2(c) states - For a separate length sizing test, the regions of each specimen containing a flaw to be sized shall be identified to the candidate.

Item 9 - Paragraph 2.3(a) states - For the depth sizing test, 80% of the flaws shall be sized at a specific location on the surface of the specimen identified to the candidate.

Item 10 - Paragraph 2.3(b) states - For the remaining flaws, the regions of each specimen containing a flaw to be sized shall be identified to the candidate. The candidate shall determine the maximum depth of the flaw in each region.

Item 11 - Paragraph 3.1, Table VIII-S2-1 provides the false call-criteria when the number of unflawed grading units is at least twice the number of flawed grading units.

2.3 Licensee Proposed Alternative And Its Basis For Use

The licensee proposed the following alternative in lieu of selected paragraphs in the 1995 Edition with 1996 Addenda ASME Code, Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10, for Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1, and 2, McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1, and 2 and Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3 during the current interval. The proposed alternative is described in an enclosure to the submittal and will be implemented through the PDI Program.

Paragraph 1.1(b) alternative:

The specimen set shall include the minimum and maximum pipe diameters and thicknesses for which the examination procedure is applicable. Pipe diameters within a range of ½ in. (13 mm) of the nominal diameter shall be considered equivalent. Pipe diameters larger than 24 in. (610 mm) shall be considered to be flat. When a range of thicknesses is to be examined, a thickness tolerance of +25% is acceptable.

Technical Basis - The change in the minimum pipe diameter tolerance from 0.9 times the diameter to the nominal diameter minus 0.5 inch provides tolerances more in line with industry practice. Though the alternative is less stringent for small pipe diameters, they typically have a thinner wall thickness than larger diameter piping. A thinner wall thickness results in shorter sound path distances that reduce the detrimental effects of the curvature. This change maintains consistency between Supplement 10 and the recent revision to Supplement 2.

Paragraph 1.1(d) alternative:

At least 60 percent of the flaws shall be cracks; the remainder shall be alternative flaws. Specimens with IGSCC shall be used when available. Alternative flaws, if used, shall provide crack-like reflective characteristics and shall be limited to the case where implantation of cracks produces spurious reflectors that are uncharacteristic of actual flaws. Alternative flaw mechanisms shall have a tip width of less than or equal to 0.002 in. (.05 mm). Note, to avoid confusion the proposed alternative modifies instances of the term "cracks" or "cracking" to the term flaws because of the use of alternative "flaw" mechanisms.

Technical Basis - Implanting a crack requires excavation of the base material on at least one side of the flaw. While this may be satisfactory for ferritic materials, it does not produce a useable axial flaw in austenitic materials because the sound beam, which normally passes only through base material, must now travel through weld material on at least one side, producing an unrealistic flaw response. In addition, it is important to preserve the dendritic structure present in field welds that would otherwise be destroyed by the implantation process. To resolve these

issues, the proposed alternative allows the use of up to 40 percent fabricated flaws as an alternative flaw mechanism under uncontrolled conditions. The fabricated flaws are isostatically compressed which produces ultrasonic reflective characteristics similar to tight cracks.

Paragraph 1.1(d)(1) alternative:

At least 80 percent of the flaws shall be contained wholly in weld or buttering material. At least one and a maximum of 10 percent of the flaws shall be in ferritic base material. At least one and a maximum of 10 percent of the flaws shall be in austenitic base material.

Technical Basis - Under the 1995 Edition 1996 Addenda of the ASME Code Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10, as few as 25 percent of the flaws are contained in austenitic weld or buttering material. Recent experience has indicated that flaws contained within the weld are likely scenarios. The metallurgical structure of austenitic weld material is ultrasonically more challenging than either ferritic or austenitic base material. The proposed alternative is therefore more challenging than the current Code.

Paragraph 1.2(b) alternative:

Detection sets shall be selected from Table VIII-S10-1. The number of unflawed grading units shall be at least one and a half times the number of flawed grading units.

Technical Basis - Table VIII-S10-1 provides a statistically based ratio between the number of unflawed grading units and the number of flawed grading units. The proposed alternative reduces the ratio to 1.5 times to reduce the number of test samples to a more reasonable number from the human factors perspective. However, the statistical basis used for screening personnel and procedures are still maintained at the same level with competent personnel being successful and less skilled personnel being unsuccessful. The acceptance criteria for the statistical basis are in Table VIII-S10-1.

Paragraph 1.2(c)(1) and 1.3(c) alternative:

The proposed alternative to the flaw distribution requirements of Paragraph 1.2(c)(1) (detection) and 1.3(c) (length) is to use the Paragraph 1.4(b) (depth) distribution table (see below) for all qualifications.

Flaw Depth (%Wall Thickness)	Minimum Number of Flaws
10-30%	20%
31-60%	20%
61-100%	20%
At least 75% of the flaws shall be in the range of 10-60% of wall thickness.	

Technical Basis - The proposed alternative uses the depth sizing distribution for both detection and depth sizing because it provides for a better distribution of flaw sizes within the test set. This distribution allows candidates to perform detection, length, and depth sizing demonstrations simultaneously utilizing the same test set. The requirement that at least 75 percent of the flaws shall be in the range of 10 to 60 percent of the wall thickness provides an overall distribution tolerance while the distribution uncertainty decreases the possibilities for testmanship that would be inherent to a uniform distribution. It must be noted that it is possible to achieve the same distribution utilizing the present requirements, but it is preferable to make the criteria consistent.

Paragraph 2.0 first sentence alternative:

For qualifications from the outside surface, the specimen inside surface and identification shall be concealed from the candidate. When qualifications are performed from the inside surface, the flaw location and specimen identification shall be obscured to maintain a "blind test".

Technical Basis - The 1995 Edition 1996 Addenda of the ASME Code Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10 requires that the inside be concealed from the candidate. This makes qualifications conducted from the inside of the pipe (e.g., pressurized-water reactor (PWR) nozzle to safe end welds) impractical. The proposed alternative differentiates between ID and OD scanning surfaces, requires that they be conducted separately, and requires that flaws be concealed from the candidate. This is consistent with the recent revision to Supplement 2.

Paragraph 2.2(b) and 2.2(c) alternative:

... Containing a flaw to be sized may be identified to the candidate.

Technical Basis - The 1995 Edition 1996 Addenda of the ASME Code Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10 requires that the regions of each specimen containing a flaw to be length sized shall be identified to the candidate. The candidate shall determine the length of the flaw in each region (Note, that length and depth sizing use the term "regions" while detection uses the term "grading units" - the two terms define different concepts and are not intended to be equal or interchangeable). To ensure security of the samples, the proposed alternative modifies the first "shall" to a "may" to allow the test administrator the option of not identifying specifically where a flaw is located. This is consistent with the recent revision to Supplement 2.

Paragraph 2.3(a) and 2.3(b) alternative:

... Regions of each specimen containing a flaw to be sized may be identified to the candidate.

Technical Basis - The 1995 Edition 1996 Addenda of the ASME Code Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10 requires that a large number of flaws be sized at a specific location. The proposed alternative changes the "shall" to a "may" which modifies this from a specific area to a more generalized region to ensure security of samples. This is consistent with the recent revision to Supplement 2. It also incorporates terminology from length sizing for additional clarity.

Paragraph 3.1 alternative:

Use the acceptance Table VIII-S10-1 in the submittal which is a modification of Table VIII-S2-1.

Technical Basis - The proposed alternative replaces Table VIII-S2-1 with a new Table VIII-S10-1. The new table is a modified version of Table VIII-S2-1 to reflect the reduced number of unflawed grading units and allowable false calls. As a part of ongoing Code activities, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has reviewed the statistical significance to this new Table VIII-S10-1.

2.4 Justification For Granting Relief

The licensee requests approval to use the proposed alternatives described above in lieu of the ASME Section XI, Appendix VIII, Supplement 10 requirements. The licensee stated that compliance with the proposed alternatives will provide an adequate level of quality and safety for the examination of the affected welds.

2.5 Implementation Schedule

The licensee stated that it will perform ultrasonic examinations of Category B-F and Category C-F dissimilar metal piping welds for the remainder of the 3rd 10-year Inspection Interval for Oconee, Units 1, 2, and 3 and the remainder of the 2nd 10-year Inspection Interval for McGuire, Units 1 and 2 and Catawba, Units 1 and 2.

3.0 STAFF EVALUATION

The licensee proposed to use the program developed by PDI that is similar to the Code requirements. The differences between the Code and the PDI program are discussed below.

Paragraph 1.1(b)

The Code requirement that pipe diameters within a range of 0.9 to 1.5 times a nominal diameter shall be considered equivalent was established for a single nominal diameter. When applying the Code-required tolerance to a range of diameters, the tolerance rapidly expands on the high side. Under the current code requirements, a 5-inch OD pipe would be equivalent to a range of 4.5-inch to 7.5-inch diameter pipe. Under the proposed PDI guidelines, the equivalent range would be reduced to 4.5-inch to 5.5-inch diameter. With the current Code requirements, a 16-inch nominal diameter pipe would be equivalent to a range of 14.4-inch to 24-inch diameter pipe. The licensee's proposed alternative would significantly reduce the equivalent range of 15.5-inch to 16.5-inch diameter pipe. The difference between the Code and the proposed alternative for diameters less than 5 inches is not significant because of shorter metal path and beam spread associated with smaller diameter piping. The licensee's proposed alternative is considered more conservative overall than the current Code requirements and is, therefore, acceptable.

Paragraph 1.1(d)

The Code requires all flaws to be cracks. Manufacturing test specimens containing cracks free of spurious reflections and telltale indicators is extremely difficult in austenitic material. To

overcome these difficulties, PDI developed a process for fabricating flaws that produce ultrasonic testing acoustic responses similar to the responses associated with real cracks. PDI presented its process for discussion at public meetings held June 12 through 14, 2001, and January 31 through February 2, 2002, at the EPRI Nondestructive Examination Center, Charlotte, NC. The NRC staff attended these meetings and determined that the process parameters used for manufacturing fabricated flaws resulted in acceptable acoustic responses. PDI is selectively installing these fabricating flaws in specimen locations that are unsuitable for real cracks.

Paragraph 1.1(d)(1)

The Code requires that at least 50 percent of the flaws be contained in austenitic material. In addition, it requires that 50 percent of the flaws in the austenitic material be contained wholly in weld or buttering material. This means that at least 25 percent of the total flaws must be located in the weld or buttering material. Field experience shows that flaws identified during ISI of dissimilar metal welds are more likely to be located in the weld or buttering material. The grain structure of austenitic weld and buttering material represents a much more stringent ultrasonic scenario than that of a ferritic material or austenitic base material. Flaws made in austenitic base material are difficult to create free of spurious reflectors and telltale indicators. The licensee's proposed alternative of 80 percent of the flaws in the weld metal or buttering material provides a challenging testing scenario reflective of field experience and minimizes testmanship associated with telltale reflectors common to placing flaws in austenitic base material.

Paragraph 1.2(b) and Paragraph 3.1

The Code requires that detection sets meet the requirements of Table VIII-S2-1 which specifies the minimum number of flaws in a test set to be 5 with 100 percent detection. The current Code also requires the number of unflawed grading units to be two times the number of flawed grading units. The licensee's proposed alternative would follow the detection criteria of the table beginning with a minimum number of flaws in a test set being 10, and reducing the number of false calls to one and a half times the number of flawed grading units. The changes to Table VIII-S2-1 are shown in Table VIII-S10-1. Paragraph 3.1 replaces Table VIII-S2-1 with Table VIII-S10-1 and reflects the reduced number of unflawed grading units and allowable false calls. The NRC staff finds that the licensee's proposed alternative satisfies the pass/fail objective established for Appendix VIII performance demonstration acceptance criteria.

Paragraph 1.2(c)(1) and Paragraph 1.3(c)

For detection and length sizing, the Code requires at least 1/3 of the flaws to be located between 10 and 30 percent through the wall thickness and 1/3 located greater than 30 percent through the wall thickness. The remaining flaws would be located randomly throughout the wall thickness. The licensee's proposed alternative sets the distribution criteria for detection and length sizing to be the same as the depth sizing distribution, which stipulates that at least 20 percent of the flaws be located in each of the increments of 10-30 percent, 31-60 percent, and 61-100 percent. The remaining 40 percent would be located randomly throughout the wall thickness. With the exception of the 10-30 percent increment, the proposed alternative is a subset of the current Code requirement. The 10-30 percent increment would be in the subset if it contained at least 30 percent of the flaws. The change simplifies assembling test sets for detection and sizing qualifications and is more indicative of conditions in the field. The

licensee's proposed alternative provides for similar difficulties as the Code and is, therefore, considered acceptable.

Paragraph 2.0

The Code requires the specimen inside surface to be concealed from the candidate. This requirement is applicable for test specimens used for qualifications performed from the outside surface. With the expansion of Supplement 10 to include qualifications performed from the inside surface, the inside surface must be accessible while maintaining the specimen integrity. The proposed alternative requires that flaws and specimen identifications be obscured from candidates, thus maintaining blind test conditions. It is noted that these welds for PWRs are normally examined from their reactor pressure vessel (RPV) inner surface, and for boiling-water reactors the examination is performed on the RPV outside surface. The licensee's proposed alternative is, therefore, applicable for PWRs. The NRC staff finds the licensee's proposed alternative to be appropriate and is, therefore, acceptable.

Paragraph 2.2(b) and Paragraph 2.2(c)

The Code requires that the location of flaws added to the test set for length sizing shall be identified to the candidate. The licensee's proposed alternative is to make identifying the location of additional flaws an option. This option provides an additional element of difficulty to the testing process because the candidate would be expected to demonstrate the skill of detecting and sizing flaws over an area larger than a specific location. The licensee's proposed alternative is more conservative than the Code requirement and is, therefore, acceptable.

Paragraph 2.3(a) and Paragraph 2.3(b)

The Code requires that 80 percent of the flaws are sized in a specific location that is identified to the candidate. The licensee's proposed alternative permits detection and depth sizing to be conducted separately or concurrently. In order to maintain a blind test, the location of the flaws cannot be shared with the candidate. For depth sizing that is conducted separately, allowing the test administrator the option of not identifying flaw locations makes the testing process more challenging. The licensee's proposed alternative is more conservative than the Code requirements and is, therefore, acceptable.

Also, a further issue discussed in the licensee's paragraph 2.3(b) involves a Code requirement that the location of flaws added to the test set for depth sizing shall be identified to the candidate. The licensee's proposed alternative constitutes identifying the location of additional flaws as an option. This option provides an additional element of difficulty to the testing process because the candidate would be expected to demonstrate the skill of finding and sizing flaw's in an area larger than a specific location. The alternative is more conservative than the Code requirement and is, therefore, acceptable.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The NRC staff has determined that the proposed alternative to Supplement 10, as administered by the PDI program and as described in relief request 03-GO-009, will provide an acceptable level of quality and safety. Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(a)(3)(i), the NRC staff authorizes the proposed alternative described in the licensee's letter dated July 1, 2003, for the

third 10-year ISI interval for Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3, and the second 10-year ISI interval for McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1, and 2, and Catawba Nuclear Station Units 1, and 2.

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Date: December 10, 2003

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