

April 27, 2004

Mr. David J. Modeen
Vice President & Chief Nuclear Officer
The Electric Power Research Institute
1300 W.T. Harris Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28262

SUBJECT: CANCELLATION OF EPRI/NRC COOPERATE PROJECT ON UNDERWATER WELDING; EPRI LETTER DATED FEBRUARY 4, 2004

Dear Mr. Modeen:

In your letter dated February, 2004, you requested that the NRC reconsider the cancellation of the project entitled, "Welding Highly Irradiated Materials to Repair Degraded BWR In-Vessel Components." We agree that the products produced to date through this cooperative effort have been very valuable to the industry and NRC. I regret, however, that RES is no longer in a position to fund the Phase II efforts. Several high priority emerging issues have compelled us to re-evaluate our research priorities. Phase I results indicated that the beltline region fluences are lower than originally predicted. Hence, issues relative to underwater welding of highly irradiated materials are not as urgent as once believed. In addition, the completion of the program as planned is estimated to be greater than \$700,000 over the next two years. Because of the ground breaking nature of the computer code efforts, there is a high probability that a follow-on effort of between \$150,000 and \$200,000 would be required to resolve questions/anomalies in completing Phase II efforts. Recognizing that high priority issues have been completed, significant cost of addressing residual issues, and other important demands for resources lead us to close out this effort. We have directed Brookhaven National Laboratory to complete the last Phase I subtask and issue the final NUREG report. Should new information relative to this project regarding urgency and needs become available, we would of course reconsider our decision.

RES will, however, be able to go forward with the analyses of the core shroud bolts as planned. The research results are important for benchmarking computer codes used by the industry to calculate fluence, and the effort is relatively low-cost. Wallace Norris, the RES project manager, has been in contact with Ken Wolfe, the EPRI project manger, to coordinate this work.

I appreciate your understanding, and I want to assure you that we remain committed to the partnership that has developed over many years.

Sincerely,

Original signed by A. Thadani /RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

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DATE	03/12/04	03/15/04	03/16/04	04/27/04

OFFICIAL RECORD COPY
April 27, 2004

Mr. Lewis Sumner
Vice President Hatch Project
Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc.
Post Office Box 1295
Birmingham, AL 35201

SUBJECT: CANCELLATION OF EPRI/NRC COOPERATE PROJECT ON UNDERWATER
WELDING; EPRI LETTER DATED JANUARY 5, 2004

Dear Mr. Sumner:

I want to thank you for your letter dated February, 2004, requesting that the NRC reconsider the cancellation of the project entitled, "Welding Highly Irradiated Materials to Repair Degraded BWR In-Vessel Components." We understand that Southern Nuclear and other utilities made significant contributions to this project expecting certain items in return, i.e., material property data such as helium and boron content so that the weldability of highly irradiated in-vessel components could be assessed, and improvements in the computer codes used by the industry to calculate fluence. We have re-considered the status of the project, and we will be able to go forward with analyzing the Hatch core shroud bolt samples. I understand that Southern Nuclear plans to obtain the samples in April 2004 during the present outage. We have instructed Pacific Northwest National Laboratory to make preparations to receive the samples and immediately begin the analyses.

I regret, however, that the NRC is no longer in a position to fund the efforts relative to improving the capabilities of the vessel fluence calculational methodology. Several high priority emerging issues have compelled us to re-evaluate our research priorities. Results to date indicate that the beltline region fluences are lower than originally anticipated. Hence, weldability of components in the upper vessel region is not expected to be a near-term issue. In addition, the efforts relative to improving vessel fluence calculational methodology is estimated to be greater than \$700,000 over the next two years. Because of the ground breaking nature of the computer code efforts, there is a high probability that a follow-on effort of between \$150,000 and \$200,000 would be required to resolve questions/anomalies in completing the efforts. Recognizing that high priority issues have been completed, significant cost of addressing residual issues, and other important demands for resources lead us to close out this effort. We have directed Brookhaven National Laboratory to complete the last task, which is the comparison of the thermal fluences of the Hatch jet pump riser brace pad samples, and issue the final NUREG report. Should new information relative to this project regarding urgency and needs become available, we would of course reconsider our decision. Wallace Norris, the RES project manager, has been in contact with Ken Wolfe, the EPRI project manger, to coordinate this work.

I appreciate your understanding. We commend Southern Nuclear's willingness to participate in research activities which will advance the state-of-the-art of the industry.

Sincerely,

Original signed by A. Thadani /RA/

Ashok C. Thadani, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

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