

July 10, 2007

Rick Libra, BWRVIP Chairman
DTE Energy
Fermi Nuclear Plant (M/S 280 OBA)
6400 N. Dixie Highway
Newport, MI 48166-9726

SUBJECT: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF WITHDRAWAL OF BWRVIP-104 REPORT,
"EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS SHROUD
SUPPORT CRACKING IN BWRS," (TAC NO. MB8970)

Dear Mr. Libra:

By letter dated July 12, 2006, the Boiling Water Reactor Vessel and Internals Project (BWRVIP) provided responses to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff's request for additional information (RAI) in its letter dated March 29, 2004, concerning the Electric Power Research Institute Technical Report 1003555, "Evaluation and Recommendations to Address Shroud Support Cracking in BWRs (BWRVIP-104)." In response to RAI-4, the BWRVIP requested in its letter dated July 12, 2006, that the BWRVIP-104 report be withdrawn in its entirety and that the inspection guidance in the BWRVIP-38 report, "BWR Shroud Support Inspection and Flaw Evaluation Guidelines," continue to be utilized. The BWRVIP concludes that inspection of the H8 and H9 welds in the core shroud supports is not practical during a typical refueling outage and is not necessary due to the large flaw tolerance of the shroud supports.

The NRC staff acknowledges the withdrawal of the BWRVIP-104 report and will discontinue the review of the subject report. The NRC staff also understands that the BWR licensees will use the BWRVIP-38 report as a basis for the inspection of BWR core shroud supports. However, the NRC notes that the open items in the NRC staff's safety evaluation regarding the BWRVIP-38 report, dated July 24, 2000, still need to be addressed. Specifically, the NRC staff is interested in seeing the following open item from its July 24, 2000, safety evaluation brought to closure:

The staff finds that the BWRVIP should revise the BWRVIP-38 report such that, when the inspection tooling and methodologies are developed that allow the welds in the lower plenum to be accessible, the guidelines will state that licensees will inspect these welds with the appropriate NDE method, in order to establish a baseline for these welds. An appropriate re-inspection schedule, based on appropriate safety considerations, should be established by the BWRVIP in a revised BWRVIP-38 report. The staff requests that the BWRVIP provide the proposed revised inspection guidance, with appropriate scope expansion criteria and a re-inspection schedule, to the staff in a timely manner. The staff further requests that the BWRVIP provide the schedule for when an inspection capability for the lower plenum will be available and will be implemented, and the appropriate justification for this schedule. Until this revision to the BWRVIP-38 report is made, the staff considers this issue open.

The NRC staff interest in the closure of this open item is related to the discovery of extensive cracking in a foreign BWR (Tsuruga, Unit 1) during replacement of its core shroud. Most of the cracking found at Tsuruga, Unit 1 was axially orientated (transverse to the weld) and located on the bottom surface of the core shroud support welds (H8 and H9). It should be noted that none of the cracks detected were found to have propagated into the reactor pressure vessel low alloy steel material and did not compromise the structural integrity of the core shroud support welds or reactor pressure vessel. However, the cracking observed at Tsuruga, Unit 1 has shown that these locations are susceptible to cracking, and therefore inspection capabilities are needed to assess the potential for cracking and that any observed cracking has not adversely affected the structural integrity of the core shroud support welds.

Therefore, the NRC staff still considers this issue open, and requests that the BWRVIP resolve this open item. The NRC will continue to engage the BWRVIP in resolving this open item.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mr. John Honcharik of my staff at (301) 415-1157.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Matthew A. Mitchell, Chief
Vessels & Internals Integrity Branch
Division of Component Integrity
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Project No. 704

cc: BWRVIP Service List

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/RA/

Matthew A. Mitchell, Chief
Vessels & Internals Integrity Branch
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OFFICE	DCI/CVIB	DCI/CVIB
NAME	JHoncharik	MMitchell
DATE	7/6/2007	7/10/2007

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CC:

Randy Stark, EPRI BWRVIP
Integration Manager
Raj Pathania, EPRI BWRVIP
Mitigation Manager
Ken Wolfe, EPRI BWRVIP
Repair Manager
Larry Steinert, EPRI BWRVIP
Electric Power Research Institute
P.O. Box 10412
3420 Hillview Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Paul J. Davison
BWRVIP Executive Oversight Committee
PSEG Nuclear, LLC
Salem/Hope Creek Nuclear Station
11 Yubas Ave.
Burlington, NJ 08016

Bob Geier, Technical Chairman
BWRVIP Assessment Committee
Exelon Corporation
Cornerstone II at Cantera
4300 Winfield Rd.
Warrenville, IL 60555

Denver Atwood, Technical Chairman
BWRVIP Repair Focus Group
Southern Nuclear Operating Co.
Post Office Box 1295
40 Inverness Center Parkway
(M/S B031)
Birmingham, AL 35242-4809

Jeff Goldstein, Technical Chairman
BWRVIP Mitigation Committee
Entergy Nuclear NE
440 Hamilton Ave. (M/S K-WPO-11c)
White Plains, NY 10601

Charles J. Wirtz, Chairman
Technical Chairman BWRVIP Integration Committee
FirstEnergy Corp.
Perry Nuclear Power Plant
(M/S A250)
10 Center Road
Perry, OH 44081

Amir Shahkarami, Executive Chairman
BWRVIP Integration Committee
Exelon Corporation
Cornerstone II at Cantera
4300 Winfield Rd.
Warrenville, IL 60555-4012

Robert Carter, EPRI BWRVIP
Assessment Manager
Jeff Landrum, EPRI BWRVIP
Inspection Manager
EPRI NDE Center
P.O. Box 217097
1300 W. T. Harris Blvd.
Charlotte, NC 28221

Richard Anderson, Executive Chairman
BWRVIP Assessment Committee
Vice President, Nuclear
FirstEnergy Service Co.
Perry Nuclear Power Plant (M/S A-PY-290)
10 Center Road
Perry, OH 44081

Joe Donahue
BWRVIP Executive Oversight Committee
V. P., Nuclear Engineering & Services
Progress Energy, Inc.
410 S. Wilmington St. (M/S PEB6)
Raleigh, NC 27601-1849

Dennis Madison
BWRVIP Executive Oversight Committee
Site Vice President
Southern Nuclear Operating Co.
Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant
US Hwy 1 N
Baxley, GA 31515-2010