

June 1, 2009
EN-09-024

OFFICE OF ENFORCEMENT
NOTIFICATION OF SIGNIFICANT REGULATORY ACTION

Licensee: Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (EA-09-054)
Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant
Docket No. 05000321/366

Subject: ISSUANCE OF FINAL SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION

This is to inform the Commission that a White Significance Determination Process (SDP) finding will be issued on or about June 4, 2009, to Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC) as a result of inspections at the Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant. This White finding, an issue with low to moderate safety significance, which may require additional NRC inspections, involves the licensee's failure to promptly identify and correct the problem of cracking in the glands of the emergency diesel generator (EDG) coupling.

Specifically, on July 12, 2008, while conducting a routine surveillance procedure, the 1B EDG was manually shutdown due to excessive vibration and declared inoperable. Post inspections identified the cause of the excessive vibration to be several age-related cracks of the rubber gland on both the diesel engine flywheel side and the generator side of the coupling. On September 6, 2008, an NRC special inspection team identified that the licensee had observed minor cracks since 1994, but did not recognize the cracks as an indication of coupling deterioration. It was later revealed in the root cause evaluation that cracks were observed as early as 1988 on the 2C EDG coupling. However, this condition was not documented during routine maintenance inspections. In November 2008, the licensee performed dynamic testing of the 1B EDG coupling. The coupling failed 30 minutes into a loaded 2-hour test run, thus failing to meet its 24 hour mission time for accident analysis. The associated couplings were manufactured around 1970 and installed during original plant construction. Subsequent to the 1B EDG coupling vibration issues, the licensee has replaced all five EDG couplings. This finding was considered to have a cross-cutting aspect in the area of Problem Identification & Resolution in conjunction with the subject violation.

A Notice of Violation is included based on a violation of 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix B, Criterion XVI, "Corrective Action." The regulation states, in part, measures shall be established to assure that conditions adverse to quality, such as failures, malfunctions, deficiencies, deviations, defective material and equipment and nonconformances are promptly identified and corrected. Contrary to this requirement, the licensee failed to promptly identify and correct a condition adverse to quality. Since 1988, the licensee had observed cracks in the glands of the EDG couplings, but did not recognize the cracking was an indication of coupling deterioration. This fact was not documented during routine maintenance inspections, therefore there was no condition report to identify and correct the condition. Consequently, the 1B EDG coupling developed higher than normal vibration during a surveillance test and caused the 1B EDG to become inoperable.

It should be noted that the licensee has not been specifically informed of the regulatory action.

The schedule of issuance and notification is:

Mailing of Final Significance Determination
Telephone Notification of Licensee

June 4, 2009
June 4, 2009

The State of Georgia will be notified.

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