



THE KEENE

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SENTINEL

Reactor needs checking

About a month ago, I began seeing reports from various European news sources that the Doel 3 nuclear reactor in Belgium had been shut down because of possible cracks in the reactor vessel.

A few days later, reports were that though they were each tiny, there were thousands of them. The head of the regulating agency in Belgium said it was hard to envision the reactor ever being repaired.

The investigation that followed indicated the cracks were the result of manufacturing flaws. All reactors built by the Rotterdam Drydock Company, which went bankrupt some years back, are considered suspect.

There were 21 such reactors, and the regulators of the countries where these reactors were sited met to consider what to do about the situation. One thing clear is that cursory inspection is not enough. It must be done by ultrasound.

Some countries, including Belgium and Germany, shut down reactors built by Rotterdam Drydock for inspection. The government of the UK took the matter a step further, and shut down a reactor for inspection even though it was made by a different manu-

facturer, because it was of the same design.

Vermont Yankee has one of the reactors in question. I am finding two different stories about this, and unfortunately NRC records do not seem to clarify them for me.

The reactors involved were made so long ago that in some cases it is difficult to know precisely who made them. Some reports say Rotterdam Drydocks subcontracted the entire reactor for a U.S. company, while others say it only manufactured a huge part of the reactor, with other parts from this country.

In either case, there could be trouble.

I would think the NRC would be on this and talking about what they intend will do. I should think Entergy would issue a statement, unless it is afraid there may be something to hide. I find the silence on this issue distressing, and I think everyone should be made aware of it.

Vermont Yankee's reactor must be considered suspect until all reactor parts that may have been made by Rotterdam Drydock have been cleared by ultrasound inspection.
GEORGE HARVEY
181 Elliot St.
Brattleboro

B1158