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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION II
101 MARIETTA ST., N.W., SUITE 3100
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

JUN 26 1979

In Reply Refer To:

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Duke Power Company
ATTN: W. O. Parker, Jr.
Vice President, Steam Production
P. O. Box 33189
Charlotte, NC 28242

Gentlemen:

The enclosed Bulletin 79-17 is forwarded to you for information. No written response is required. However, the potential corrosion behavior of safety related systems as it regards your plant over the long term should be taken into consideration. If you desire additional information concerning this matter, please contact this office.

Sincerely,


James P. O'Reilly
Director

Enclosure:
IE Bulletin No. 79-17

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Duke Power Company

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cc w/encl:

M. D. McIntosh, Project Manager
Post Office Box 488
Cornelius, North Carolina 28031

J. C. Rogers, Project Manager
Post Office Box 33189
Charlotte, North Carolina 28242

J. E. Smith, Station Manager
Post Office Box 1175
Seneca, South Carolina 29678

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

July 26, 1979

IE Bulletin No. 79-17

PIPE CRACKS IN STAGNANT BORATED WATER SYSTEMS AT PWR PLANTS

Description of Circumstances:

During the period of November 1974 to February 1977 a number of cracking incidents have been experienced in safety-related stainless steel piping systems and portions of systems which contain oxygenated, stagnant or essentially stagnant borated water. Metallurgical investigations revealed these cracks occurred in the weld heat affected zone of 8-inch to 10-inch type 304 material (schedule 10 and 40), initiating on the piping I.D. surface and propagating in either an intergranular or transgranular mode typical of Stress Corrosion Cracking. Analysis indicated the probable corrodents to be chloride and oxygen contamination in the affected systems. Plants affected up to this time were Arkansas Nuclear Unit 1, R. E. Ginna, H.B. Robinson Unit 2, Crystal River Unit 3, San Onofre Unit 1, and Surry Units 1 and 2. The NRC issued Circular 76-06 (copy attached) in view of the apparent generic nature of the problem.

During the refueling outage of Three Mile Island Unit 1 which began in February of this year, visual inspections disclosed five (5) through-wall cracks at welds in the spent fuel cooling system piping and one (1) at a weld in the decay heat removal system. These cracks were found as a result of local boric acid build-up and later confirmed by liquid penetrant tests. This initial identification of cracking was reported to the NRC in a Licensee Event Report (LER) dated May 16, 1979. A preliminary metallurgical analysis was performed by the licensee on a section of cracked and leaking weld joint from the spent fuel cooling system. The conclusion of this analysis was that cracking was due to Intergranular Stress Corrosion Cracking (IGSCC) originating on the pipe I.D. The cracking was localized to the heat affected zone where the type 304 stainless steel is sensitized (precipitated carbides) during welding. In addition to the main through-wall crack, incipient cracks were observed at several locations in the weld heat affected zone including the weld root fusion area where a miniscule lack of fusion had occurred. The stresses responsible for cracking are believed to be primarily residual welding stresses in as much as the calculated applied stresses were found to be less than code design limits. There is no conclusive evidence at this time to identify those aggressive chemical species which promoted this IGSCC attack. Further analytical efforts in this area and on other system welds are being pursued.

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