

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION III
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STATEMENT ON DAVIS BESSE QUALITY ASSURANCE INVESTIGATION
FEBRUARY 21, 1975

In July 1974 The Atomic Energy Commission began an investigation at the Davis Besse Nuclear Power Station construction site as a result of allegations presented to the AEC concerning the quality assurance program for the painting of the inside of the steel containment shell. Our inspectors found the quality assurance program in this particular area was inadequate at all levels: the utility, Toledo Edison Co.; the contractor, Bethel Corp.; and the subcontractor, Bagwell Coatings. The investigation identified 10 violations of quality assurance requirements -- these violations dealt primarily with the procedures and documentation for the painting job, but not necessarily with the quality of the painting itself. All 10 violations involved work performed by Bagwell Coatings.

The containment vessel is a leaktight steel shell within a concrete containment structure. Inside the vessel are the reactor and steam generators, along with the reactor cooling system piping.

At this time there has been no final determination by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the agency which succeeded the Atomic Energy Commission, that the painting work meets applicable requirements. Observation, coupled with tests performed by contractor personnel, has not shown any problem areas to date. Should any deficiencies be found, there is ample time for corrective action. The Davis Besse plant is not expected to be ready for operation until early 1976.

The painting of the containment shell is almost complete -- and no painting has been done since December 1973. After the job is completed, NRC inspectors must be satisfied that the paint job meets specifications and requirements for the work. Any substandard areas will have to be corrected.

Before the Davis Besse plant goes into operation Toledo Edison must obtain an operating license from the NRC. The utility will not be granted a license until the facility has been completed satisfactorily.

The purpose of painting the containment walls is to prevent corrosion. If the steel were to corrode -- over a long period of time it is possible that the corrosion could penetrate the steel and reduce its effectiveness as a leak barrier during normal operations or in the event of an accident.

The quality assurance violations identified during this investigation were regarded as serious, -- because they represented breakdowns



in the quality assurance program designed to maximize the quality of the work on the nuclear plant. But the actual effect on the paint job is less significant.

Any flaws that are identified in the painting can still be corrected -- and, even after the plant goes into operation, the steel walls are accessible if any corrosion should be detected.

As a result of the NRC investigation, Toledo Edison was cited for the 10 violations with the requirement that they detail what corrective measures would be taken to alleviate the problems. Toledo Edison has responded to these violations, and the NRC staff has found the response to be acceptable.

A subsequent inspection in October 1974 focussed on the corrective action taken by Toledo Edison. This inspection showed appropriate corrective actions had been implemented.

It is not unusual in construction jobs as immense as a nuclear power station for there to be problems with the work in a specific area. This is why the NRC inspects the work and procedures closely as the project progresses -- the important thing to realize in this instance is that the NRC inspectors, acting on the allegations, identified the problems and pursued them. The NRC will continue to monitor the painting work to make sure it is satisfactory.

During 1974 inspection teams from the NRC regional office in Chicago performed 10 inspections at Davis Besse -- and each of these inspections lasted several days. This inspection effort will intensify as construction nears completion and there will be many more inspections before the plant can be approved for an operating license.