



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION III
799 ROOSEVELT ROAD
GLEN ELLYN, ILLINOIS 60137

SEP 2 1980

State of Illinois
Department of Public Health
ATTN: Mr. Gary N. Wright, Chief
Division of Nuclear Safety
535 West Jefferson Street
Springfield, IL 62761

Gentlemen:

The enclosed IE Bulletin No. 79-26, Revision 1 titled "Boron Loss From BWR Control Blades" was sent to the licensees listed below for action on August 29, 1980:

Commonwealth Edison Company
Dresden 1, 2, 3 (50-10, 50-237, 50-249)
Quad-Cities 1, 2 (50-254, 50-265)

Consumers Power Company
Big Rock Point (50-155)

Dairyland Power Cooperative
LACBWR (50-409)

Iowa Electric Light & Power Company
Duane Arnold (50-331)

Northern States Power Company
Monticello (50-263)

Sincerely,

Helen Pappas
Helen Pappas, Chief
Administrative Branch

Enclosure: IE Bulletin
No. 79-26, Revision 1

cc w/encl:
Mr. D. W. Kane,
Sargent & Lundy
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8.009230 537

SSINS No.: 6820
Accession No.:
8006190042

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

August 29, 1980

IE Bulletin No. 79-26 Rev. 1

BORON LOSS FROM BWR CONTROL BLADES

Description of Circumstances:

The General Electric Company (GE) has informed us of a failure mode for control blades which can cause a loss of boron poison material. Hot cell examinations of both foreign and domestic blades have revealed cracks near the upper end of stainless steel tubing and loss of boron from the tubes. The cracks and boron loss have so far been confined to locations in the poison tubes with more than 50 percent Boron-10 (B^{10}) local depletion. Observed crack sizes range from a quarter to a half inch in length and from one to two mils in width.

GE has postulated that the cracking is due to stress corrosion induced by solidification of boron carbide (B_4C) particles and swelling of the compacted B_4C as helium and lithium concentrations grow. Once primary coolant penetrates the cladding (i.e., the cracking has progressed through the cladding wall and the helium-lithium pressures are sufficient to open the crack), boron is leached out of the tube at locations with more than 50 percent B^{10} local depletion (local depletion is considered to be twice the average depletion). It was further found with similar cracking but with less than 50 percent local depletion of B^{10} , that leaching did not occur even though primary coolant had penetrated the cladding.

The cracking and boron loss shorten the design life of the control blade. According to the GE criteria the end of design life is reached when the reactivity worth of the blade is reduced by 10 percent, which corresponds to top quarter of the control blade. reduced the allowance for B^{10} depletion control blade from the 42 percent

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