



UNITED STATES  
 NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

RELEASED TO THE PDR  
 4/9/91  
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SEP 14 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman Carr  
 Commissioner Rogers  
 Commissioner Curtiss  
 Commissioner Remick

FROM: James M. Taylor  
 Executive Director for Operations

SUBJECT: MARK I CONTAINMENT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

This memorandum is to inform you that the licensees of Millstone, Unit 1, Dresden, Units 2 and 3, and Oyster Creek have committed to voluntarily install hardened vent pathways from the suppression pool air space to a suitable release point, such as a plant stack. Therefore, the Director of NRR will not issue Orders modifying the licenses of the above plants as previously envisaged. Additionally, this memorandum summarizes the staff's actions following the issuance of SECY-90-206, which provided the status of the subject program as of June 7, 1990.

SECY 90-206 provided the status of the licensees' responses to the Generic Letter 89-16. In that paper, the staff stated that three licensees of boiling water reactors (BWRs) with Mark I containments and isolation condensers (Millstone, Unit 1, Dresden, Units 2 and 3, and Oyster Creek) and one other licensee for a BWR with a Mark I containment (FitzPatrick) declined to make voluntary modifications to harden the vent paths from the wetwell air space to a suitable release point such as a plant stack. We further stated that if our plant-specific analyses supported a backfit, the staff would provide the results of its analyses to the affected licensees and request that they reconsider their decision. If the licensees continued to decline to make the modifications, the staff indicated that it would issue Orders to modify the licenses, requiring that a vent path from the suppression pool air space to a suitable release point be hardened to withstand the expected venting pressures. The staff's letters to the licensees, of June 15, 1990, provided the staff's backfit analyses which indicated that the backfits requiring installation of hardened vent capacity were justified.

At the request of the BWR owners group (BWROG), on July 24, 1990, the owners of plants with isolation condensers who had not volunteered to install a hardened wetwell vent, met with the staff to provide additional information to support the licensees' requests that the recommended improvement be evaluated as a part of the individual plant examination (IPE) program; and that a decision to require installation of the vent be delayed until completion of the IPE program. In a letter of July 25, 1990, the New York Power Authority provided additional information indicating that the FitzPatrick plant already has a hardened vent path from the suppression pool air space to outside the reactor building.

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After careful consideration of the additional supporting information provided during a July 21, 1990, meeting and in a follow-up letter of August 8, 1990 from Northeast Utilities regarding the isolation condenser plants, the staff continues to believe that the plants having isolation condensers should proceed without delay with the installation of the hardened wetwell vents.

On August 20, 1990, the staff wrote to the three licensees of the BWRs with Mark I containments and isolation condensers, stating the conclusion that the staff's backfit analyses remain valid in spite of the new information provided during the July 24, 1990, meeting and in the August 8, 1990, letter from Northeast Utilities. In those letters, the staff gave the licensees an additional two weeks (which ended September 3, 1990) to make a voluntary commitment for modifications. By September 4, 1990, the licensees of the isolation condenser plants responded to the staff's letters of August 20, 1990 with commitments to install requisite hardened vent paths and obviated the need for the Director of NRR to issue Orders modifying their licenses.

The staff is acting on the new information provided by the New York Power Authority regarding the existing hardened vent path at FitzPatrick. On August 22, 1990, the staff visited the FitzPatrick facility to inspect the plant's vent piping and to review the plant's procedures for venting. Based on the findings of that visit, the staff believes that the existing vent path at the FitzPatrick facility may meet the objectives of a hardened vent path. However, questions remain regarding the consequences of a ground level release outside the reactor building that would result if the vent system were used. When the staff completes its reviews regarding FitzPatrick, it will communicate its conclusions to the New York Power Authority and will advise the Commission.

Original Signed by:

James M. Taylor  
Executive Director  
for Operations

cc: SECY

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