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Nuclear Business Unit

OCT 28 1999

LR-N990464

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Document Control Desk
Washington, D.C. 20555

**RESPONSE TO NON-CITED VIOLATION (NCV) 50-311/99-07-01
SALEM GENERATING STATION UNIT NO. 2
DOCKET NO. 50-311**

Gentlemen:

On September 28, 1999, the NRC issued Inspection Report 50-272/99-07 and 50-311/99-07, identifying Non-Cited Violation (NCV) 50-311/99-07-01 for failure to comply with the requirement of Technical Specification 3.6.3. Attached, please find Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) response to the above violation. PSE&G does not believe that a violation occurred. The response discusses the bases for the PSE&G's conclusions.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this submittal, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. B. Bezilla".

M. B. Bezilla
Vice President - Operations

Attachment

IEDI

OCT 28 1999

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Attachment 1
LR-N990464

The following Non-Cited Violation was identified in NRC Inspection Report 50-272/99-07 and 50-311/99-07:

Non-Cited Violation 50-311/99-07-01

"The inspectors observed PSEG's response to an emergent work activity associated with the Unit 2 pressure/vacuum relief system outboard containment isolation valve (2VC5). This air-operated butterfly-type valve failed to stroke closed within the required time during a routine test at 12:40 a.m. on August 17, 1999. The inspectors also reviewed PSEG's compliance with applicable technical specifications while following up on this issue.

Upon the initial determination that the 2VC5 valve failed to stroke within the required two seconds, control room operators appropriately declared the valve inoperable and carried out the action statement requirements of technical specification (TS) 3.6.3. Specifically, the operators completed action b. of the TS by closing and deactivating 2VC6 (the pressure/vacuum system inboard isolation valve) within four hours. Maintenance technicians and engineering personnel promptly began troubleshooting efforts to resolve this issue since isolation of the containment penetration prevented operators from being able to vent the containment building as needed to remain below the maximum allowed building internal pressure of 0.3 psig (specified by TS 3.6.1.4).

Later, when PSEG judged that the 2VC5 valve would not be restored to an operable condition before containment building pressure reached a pressure of 0.3 psig, operators reopened 2VC5 and 2VC6 under administrative control for approximately 1.5 hours to relieve pressure (3:34 p.m. to 4:58 p.m.). At 6:37 p.m. maintenance technicians successfully completed repairs to the 2VC5 and achieved satisfactory stroke time test results. The slow valve operation was attributed to foreign material discovered in the active elements of the valve's air actuator. PSEG appropriately recorded the 2VC5 failure in their corrective action program and properly assessed the condition as a maintenance rule system functional failure, needing a root cause assessment

The inspectors determined that opening the penetration while 2VC5 remained inoperable and in the action statement was in violation of TS action statement b. Control room operators acted on PSEG management's interpretation of an asterisk (*) associated with the TS 3.6.3 limiting condition for operation (LCO), which states in part that "normally closed (containment isolation) valves may be opened on an intermittent basis under administrative control." However, the

inspectors concluded that this note applies only to OPERABLE valves since the asterisk appears in the statement of the LCO, not in the TS action statement.

PSEG management used the TS 3.6.3 basis description in the Westinghouse Improved Standard TS (NUREG-1431) as a partial justification for their interpretation. While the NUREG-1431 description would permit this activity, the inspectors noted that the analogous asterisk note in the improved Westinghouse TS is included under the action statement section. Similar permission for opening a penetration exists in the applicable Hope Creek action statement. The inspector agreed that the action of temporarily opening a penetration while in the action statement was an acceptable action in some instances, but that literal interpretation of the Salem TS did not permit this action.

...Therefore, the violation of TS 3.6.3 is being treated as a non-cited violation consistent with the Interim Enforcement Policy for pilot plants. "

Response to Violation

Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) does not believe that a violation occurred as described below.

Salem Unit 2 Technical Specification 3.6.3 action b states the following:

"Isolate each affected penetration within 4 hours by use of at least one deactivated automatic valve secured in the isolation position..."

When 2VC5 valve (Containment Pressure/Vacuum Release outboard isolation valve) was declared inoperable, operators tagged the **operable** 2VC6 valve (inboard isolation valve) in the closed position and removed power to the valve to comply with the requirements of Action b of TS 3.6.3. TS 3.6.3 has an asterisk (*) footnote that states, "normally closed or manual containment isolation valves may be opened on an intermittent basis under administrative control."

As stated in the NRC Inspection Report, '...the inspectors concluded that this note applies only to OPERABLE valves since the asterisk appears in the statement of the LCO, not in the TS action statement.'

Since the 2VC6 valve was an OPERABLE containment isolation valve that was capable of performing its design basis function, the asterisk (*) footnote of TS 3.6.3 applies to this valve, thus allowing the valve to be opened under administrative control. To validate that this conclusion was a correct reading of the TS, PSE&G reviewed the Westinghouse Improved Standard TS (ITS) (NUREG-1431). The ITS provided

additional clarifying guidance by stating that "... a penetration flowpath...may be unisolated intermittently under administrative control."

An operations troubleshooting plan was written to open the 2VC6 valve under administrative control. This troubleshooting plan provided the necessary administrative controls to comply with the requirements of TS Bases Section 3/4.6.3.

Based on the above discussion, PSE&G believes that the activities associated with opening the 2VC6 valve under administrative control were in compliance with the requirements of TS 3.6.3.

However, because of the potential for misinterpreting the TS footnote in the future, PSE&G will submit a TS change to clarify the use of administrative controls when in the action statements of TS 3.6.3.