

50-269/270/287



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

November 18, 1999

Mr. W. R. McCollum, Jr.  
Vice President, Oconee Site  
Duke Energy Corporation  
7800 Rochester Highway  
Seneca, SC 29672

SUBJECT: OCONEE NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1, 2, AND 3 RE: REVIEW OF THE  
RESPONSES FOR GENERIC LETTER 97-01, "DEGRADATION OF  
CRDM/CEDM NOZZLE AND OTHER VESSEL CLOSURE HEAD  
PENETRATIONS" (TAC NOS. M98579, M98580, AND M98681)

Dear Mr. McCollum:

This letter describes the NRC staff's assessment of the Duke Energy Corporation letters dated April 28, 1997, and July 30, 1997, which provided your 30-day and 120-day responses to Generic Letter (GL) 97-01, "Degradation of CRDM/CEDM and Other Vessel Closure Head Penetrations," and your letter of December 21, 1998, which provided your response to the staff's request for additional information (RAI) dated August 27, 1998, relative to the issuance of the GL. These responses provided your proposed program and efforts to address the potential for primary water stress corrosion cracking (PWSCC) to occur in the control rod drive mechanism (CRDM) nozzles at the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3.

On April 1, 1997, the staff issued GL 97-01 to the industry, requesting that addressees provide a description of the plans to inspect the vessel head penetrations (VHPs) at their respective pressurized-water reactor (PWR) designed plants. In the discussion section of the GL, the staff indicated that it did not object to individual PWR licensees basing their inspection activities on an integrated, industry-wide inspection program.

The Babcock and Wilcox Owners Group (B&WOG), in coordination with the efforts of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) and the other PWR Owners Groups (the Westinghouse Owners Group [WOG] and Combustion Engineering Owners Group [CEOG]), determined that it was appropriate for its members to develop a cooperative integrated inspection program in response to GL 97-01. Therefore, on July 25, 1997, the B&WOG submitted Topical Report BAW-2301, "B&WOG Integrated Response to Generic Letter 97-01, Degradation of Control Rod Drive Mechanism Nozzle and Other Vessel Closure Head Penetrations," on behalf of the members in the B&WOG. In this report, the B&WOG provided a description of the EPRI/Dominion Engineering CIRSE Model (crack initiation and growth susceptibility model) that was used to rank the VHPs at the participating plants in the owners group. You provided your 30-day and 120-day responses for the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3, on April 28, 1998, and July 30, 1998, respectively. In these responses you indicated that you were a participant in the

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B&WOG's integrated program for evaluating the potential for PWSCC to occur in the VHPs of Babcock and Wilcox designed PWRs, and that you were endorsing the probabilistic susceptibility model in Topical Report BAW-2301 as being applicable to the assessment of VHPs at the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3.

The staff performed a review of both Topical Report BAW-2301 and your responses of April 28, and July 30, 1998, and determined that some additional information was needed to complete our review. Therefore, on August 27, 1998, the staff issued an RAI requesting: (1) a description of the probabilistic susceptibility ranking for a plant's VHPs to undergo PWSCC relative to the rankings for the rest of the industry; (2) a description of how the respective susceptibility models were benchmarked; (3) a description of how the variability in the product forms, material specifications, and heat treatments used to fabricate a plant's VHPs were addressed in the susceptibility models; and (4) a description of how the models would be refined in the future to include plant-specific inspection results. As was the case for the earlier responses to the GL, the staff encouraged a coordinated, generic response to the requests in the RAI.

On December 11, 1998, NEI submitted a generic, integrated response to the RAIs on GL 97-01 on behalf of the PWR-industry and the utility members in the owners groups. In the generic submittal, NEI informed the staff that it normalized the susceptibility rankings for the industry. The generic response to the RAIs also provided sufficient information to answer the information requests in the RAIs, and emphasized that the integrated program is an ongoing program that will be implemented in conjunction with EPRI, the PWR Owners Groups, the participating utilities, and the Material Reliability Projects' Subcommittee on Alloy 600. By letter dated March 21, 1999, the staff informed NEI that the integrated program was an acceptable approach for addressing the potential for PWSCC to occur in the VHPs of PWR-designed nuclear plants, and that licensees responding to the GL could refer to the integrated program as a basis for assessing the postulated occurrence of PWSCC in PWR-design VHPs.

To date, all utilities have implemented VT-2 type visual examinations of their VHPs in compliance with the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Section XI Code requirements specified in Table IWB-2500 for Category B-P components. Most utilities, if not all, have also performed visual examinations as part of plant-specific boric acid wastage surveillance programs. In addition, the following plants have completed voluntary, comprehensive augmented volumetric inspections (eddy current examinations or ultrasonic testing examinations) of their CRDM nozzles:

- 1994 - Point Beach Unit 1 (Westinghouse design)
- 1994 - Oconee Unit 2 (B&W design)
- 1994 - D.C. Cook Unit 2 (Westinghouse design)
- 1996 - North Anna Unit 1 (Westinghouse design)
- 1998 - Millstone Unit 2 (a CE design)
- 1999 - Ginna (a Westinghouse design)

In addition, the following plants have completed voluntary, limited augmented volumetric inspections of their VHPs as well:

- 1995 - Palisades - eight instrument nozzles (CE design)
- 1996 - Oconee Unit 2 - reinspection of two CRDM nozzles (B&W design)
- 1997 - Calvert Cliffs Unit 2 - vessel head vent pipe (CE design)

The majority of these plants have been ranked as having the more susceptible VHPs in the industry. Of these inspections, only the inspections at D.C. Cook Unit 2 have resulted in the identification of any domestic PWSCC type flaw indications. The current program includes additional commitments to perform further volumetric inspections of the CRDM nozzles at Oconee Unit 2 (a reinspection of 2-12 nozzles in 1999), Crystal River 3 (in 2001, a B&W design), Diablo Canyon Unit 2 (in 1999, a Westinghouse design), Farley Unit 2 (in 2001, a Westinghouse design), and San Onofre Unit 3 (in 2002-2008, a CE design). These plants are currently ranked in either the high or moderate susceptibility categories.

On December 21, 1998, you provided your response to the staff's RAI of August 27, 1998. In your response you endorsed the NEI submittal of December 11, 1998, and indicated that you were a participant in the NEI/B&WOG integrated program. Since the additional volumetric inspections performed to date have confirmed that PWSCC is not an immediate safety concern with respect to the structural integrity of VHPs in domestic PWRs, and since we have approved the integrated program for implementation, we conclude that the integrated program provides an acceptable basis for evaluating your VHPs. Consequently, you may refer to the integrated program when submitting VHP-related licensing action submittals for the remainder of the current 40-year licensing period. Furthermore, you have addressed the integrity of your vessel head penetration nozzles in your application for license renewal for Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3. The assessment of the GL 97-01 issues will be addressed in the staff's safety evaluation for license renewal.

This completes the staff's efforts related to your responses to GL 97-01.

Sincerely,



David E. LaBarge, Senior Project Manager, Section 1  
Project Directorate II  
Division of Licensing Project Management  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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 David E. LaBarge, Senior Project Manager, Section 1  
 Project Directorate II  
 Division of Licensing Project Management  
 Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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