

November 20, 2002

Mr. John L. Skolds, President
Exelon Nuclear
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

SUBJECT: BULLETIN 2002-01, "REACTOR PRESSURE VESSEL HEAD DEGRADATION AND REACTOR COOLANT PRESSURE BOUNDARY INTEGRITY," 60-DAY RESPONSE FOR BYRON STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2, AND BRAIDWOOD STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2 - REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (TAC NOS. MB4530, MB4531, MB4528, AND MB4529)

Dear Mr. Skolds:

On March 18, 2002, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued Bulletin 2002-01, "Reactor Pressure Vessel Head Degradation and Reactor Coolant Pressure Boundary Integrity," to all holders of operating licenses for pressurized water reactors (PWRs). Within 60 days of the date of this bulletin, all PWR addressees were required to submit to the NRC the following information related to the reactor coolant pressure boundary (RCPB) other than the reactor pressure vessel (RPV) head:

The basis for concluding that your boric acid inspection program is providing reasonable assurance of compliance with the applicable regulatory requirements discussed in Generic Letter 88-05 and this bulletin. If a documented basis does not exist, provide your plans, if any, for a review of your programs.

The NRC staff has evaluated the licensees' 60-day responses to Bulletin 2002-01 concerning the rest of the RCPB and concluded that most of the licensees' 60-day responses lacked specificity. Therefore, the NRC staff could not complete its review of the boric acid corrosion control (BACC) programs in light of the lessons learned from the Davis-Besse event. The information request in Bulletin 2002-01 may not have been sufficiently focused, which, in part, may explain the lack of clarity in the licensees' 60-day responses. The NRC staff's review of the licensees' 60-day responses provided the basis for development of the questions in this request for additional information (RAI). Licensees are expected to provide responses in sufficient detail to facilitate a comprehensive staff review of their BACC programs.

The NRC is not imposing new requirements through the issuance of Bulletin 2002-01 or this RAI. The NRC staff's review of the information collected will be used as part of the decision-making process regarding possible changes to the NRC's regulation and inspection of BACC programs. The NRC staff has, however, concluded that a comprehensive BACC program would exceed the current American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Code requirements and would include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. The BACC program must address, in detail, the scope, extent of coverage, degree of insulation removal, and frequency of examination for materials susceptible to boric acid corrosion. The BACC program would also ensure that any boric acid leakage is identified before significant degradation occurs that may challenge structural integrity.
 - a. The scope should include all components susceptible to boric acid corrosion (BAC) and identify the type of inspection(s) performed (e.g., VT-2 or VT-3 examination).
 - b. The technical basis for any deviations from inspection of susceptible materials and mechanical joints must be clearly documented.
 - c. As stated in Generic Letter 88-05, "Boric Acid Corrosion of Carbon Steel Reactor Pressure Boundary Components in PWR Plants," the BACC program should identify the principal locations where leaks that are smaller than the allowable technical specification limit have the potential to cause degradation of the primary pressure boundary by boric acid corrosion. Particular consideration should be given to identifying those locations where conditions exist that could cause high concentrations of boric acid on pressure boundary surface, or locations that are susceptible to primary water stress corrosion cracking (Alloy 600 base metal and dissimilar metal Alloy 82/182 welds), or susceptible to leakage (e.g., valve packing, flange gaskets).
 - d. For inaccessible components (e.g., buried components, components within rooms, vaults, etc.) the degree of inaccessibility, and the type of inspection that would be effective for examination of the area, must be clearly defined. In addition, identify any leakage detection systems that are being used to detect potential leakage from components in inaccessible areas.
 - e. The technical basis for the frequency of implementing the BACC program must be clearly documented.
2. The examiners would be VT-2 qualified at a minimum, and would be trained to recognize that very small volumes of boric acid leakage could be indicative of significant corrosion.
3. The BACC program would ensure that any boric acid leakage is identified before significant degradation occurs that may challenge structural integrity. If observed leakage from mechanical joints is not determined to be acceptable, the appropriate corrective actions must be taken to ensure structural integrity. Evaluation criteria and procedures for structural integrity assessments must be specified. The applicable acceptance standards and their bases must also be identified.
4. Leakage from mechanical joints (e.g., bolted connections) that is determined to be acceptable for continued operation must be inspected and monitored in order to trend/evaluate changes in leakage. The bases for acceptability must be documented. Any evaluation for continued service should include consideration of corrosion mechanisms and corrosion rates. If boric acid residues are detected on components, the leakage source shall be located by removal of insulation, as necessary.

Identification of the type of insulation and any limitations concerning its removal should be addressed in the BACC program.

5. Leakage identified outside of inspections for BAC should be integrated into the BACC program.
6. Licensees would routinely review and update the BACC program in light of plant-specific and industry experience, monitoring and trending of past leakage, and proper documentation of boric acid evaluations to aid in determination of recurring conditions and root cause of leakage. New industry information should be integrated in a consistent manner such that revised procedures are clear and concise.

Please consider the above attributes in providing your responses to the RAI. The RAI is enclosed.

This request was discussed with Donald Cecchett of your staff on November 18, 2002, and it was agreed that a response would be provided within 60 days of receipt of this letter.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-8371.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Mahesh Chawla, Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate III
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. STN 50-454, STN 50-455,
STN 50-456, and STN 50-457

Enclosure: RAI

cc w/encl: See next page

Byron/Braidwood Stations

cc:

Ms. C. Sue Hauser, Project Manager
Westinghouse Electric Corporation
Energy Systems Business Unit
Post Office Box 355
Pittsburgh, PA 15230

Joseph Gallo
Gallo & Ross
1025 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1014
Washington, DC 20036

Howard A. Learner
Environmental Law and Policy
Center of the Midwest
35 East Wacker Dr., Suite 1300
Chicago, IL 60601-2110

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Byron Resident Inspectors Office
4448 N. German Church Road
Byron, IL 61010-9750

Regional Administrator, Region III
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
801 Warrenville Road
Lisle, IL 60532-4351

Ms. Lorraine Creek
RR 1, Box 182
Manteno, IL 60950

Chairman, Ogle County Board
Post Office Box 357
Oregon, IL 61061

Mrs. Phillip B. Johnson
1907 Stratford Lane
Rockford, IL 61107

George L. Edgar
Morgan, Lewis and Bockius
1800 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-5869

Attorney General
500 S. Second Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety
Office of Nuclear Facility Safety
1035 Outer Park Drive
Springfield, IL 62704

Byron Station Manager
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4450 N. German Church Road
Byron, IL 61010-9794

Site Vice President - Byron
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4450 N. German Church Road
Byron, IL 61010-9794

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Braidwood Resident Inspectors Office
35100 S. Rt. 53, Suite 79
Braceville, IL 60407

Illinois Emergency Management
Agency
Division of Disaster Assistance &
Preparedness
110 East Adams Street
Springfield, IL 62701-1109

Chairman
Will County Board of Supervisors
Will County Board Courthouse
Joliet, IL 60434

Braidwood Station Manager
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
35100 S. Rt. 53, Suite 84
Braceville, IL 60407-9619

Ms. Bridget Little Rorem
Appleseed Coordinator
117 N. Linden Street
Essex, IL 60935

Exelon Generation Company, LLC
Regulatory Assurance Supervisor - Byron
4450 N. German Church Road
Byron, IL 61010-9794

Document Control Desk-Licensing
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Senior Counsel, Nuclear
Mid-West Regional Operating Group
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Exelon Generation Company, LLC
Site Vice President - Braidwood
35100 S. Rt. 53, Suite 84
Braceville, IL 60407-9619

Vice President - Licensing and
Regulatory Affairs
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Senior Vice President, Nuclear Services
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Manager Licensing - Braidwood and Byron
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Vice President
Mid-West Operations Support
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Senior Vice President
Mid-West Regional Operating Group
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Director Licensing
Mid-West Regional Operating Group
Exelon Generation Company, LLC
4300 Winfield Road
Warrenville, IL 60555

Exelon Generation Company, LLC
Regulatory Assurance Supervisor -
Braidwood
35100 S. Rt. 53, Suite 84
Braceville, IL 60407-9619

Identification of the type of insulation and any limitations concerning its removal should be addressed in the BACC program.

- 5. Leakage identified outside of inspections for BAC should be integrated into the BACC program.
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Please consider the above attributes in providing your responses to the RAI. The RAI is enclosed.

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Sincerely,

/RA/

Mahesh Chawla, Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate 3
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. STN 50-454, STN 50-455,
STN 50-456, and STN 50-457

Enclosure: RAI

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REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
REGARDING BORIC ACID CORROSION CONTROL PROGRAMS
BYRON STATION UNITS 1 AND 2
BRAIDWOOD STATION UNITS 1 AND 2
DOCKET NOS. STN 50-454, STN 50-455, STN 50-456, AND STN 50-457

The format provided in Table A may be used to respond to the following RAIs:

1. Provide detailed information on, and the technical basis for, the inspection techniques, scope, extent of coverage, and frequency of inspections, personnel qualifications, and degree of insulation removal for examination of Alloy 600 pressure boundary material and dissimilar metal Alloy 82/182 welds and connections in the reactor coolant pressure boundary (RCPB). Include specific discussion of inspection of locations where reactor coolant leaks have the potential to come in contact with and degrade the subject material (e.g., reactor pressure vessel (RPV) bottom head).
2. Provide the technical basis for determining whether or not insulation is removed to examine all locations where conditions exist that could cause high concentrations of boric acid on pressure boundary surfaces or locations that are susceptible to primary water stress corrosion cracking (Alloy 600 base metal and dissimilar metal Alloy 82/182 welds). Identify the type of insulation for each component examined, as well as any limitations to removal of insulation. Also include in your response actions involving removal of insulation required by your procedures to identify the source of leakage when relevant conditions (e.g., rust stains, boric acid stains, or boric acid deposits) are found.
3. Describe the technical basis for the extent and frequency of walkdowns and the method for evaluating the potential for leakage in inaccessible areas. In addition, describe the degree of inaccessibility, and identify any leakage detection systems that are being used to detect potential leakage from components in inaccessible areas.
4. Describe the evaluations that would be conducted upon discovery of leakage from mechanical joints (e.g., bolted connections) to demonstrate that continued operation with the observed leakage is acceptable. Also describe the acceptance criteria that was established to make such a determination. Provide the technical basis used to establish the acceptance criteria. In addition,
 - a. If observed leakage is determined to be acceptable for continued operation, describe what inspection/monitoring actions are taken to trend/evaluate changes in leakage,

or
 - b. If observed leakage is not determined to be acceptable, describe what corrective actions are taken to address the leakage.

5. Explain the capabilities of your program to detect the low levels of reactor coolant pressure boundary leakage that may result from through-wall cracking in the bottom reactor pressure vessel head incore instrumentation nozzles. Low levels of leakage may call into question reliance on visual detection techniques or installed leakage detection instrumentation, but has the potential for causing boric acid corrosion. The NRC has had a concern with the bottom reactor pressure vessel head incore instrumentation nozzles because of the high consequences associated with loss of integrity of the bottom head nozzles. Describe how your program would evaluate evidence of possible leakage in this instance. In addition, explain how your program addresses leakage that may impact components that are in the leak path.
6. Explain the capabilities of your program to detect the low levels of reactor coolant pressure boundary leakage that may result from through-wall cracking in certain components and configurations for other small diameter nozzles. Low levels of leakage may call into question reliance on visual detection techniques or installed leakage detection instrumentation, but has the potential for causing boric acid corrosion. Describe how your program would evaluate evidence of possible leakage in this instance. In addition, explain how your program addresses leakage that may impact components that are in the leak path.
7. Explain how any aspects of your program (e.g., insulation removal, inaccessible areas, low levels of leakage, evaluation of relevant conditions) make use of susceptibility models or consequence models.
8. Provide a summary of recommendations made by your reactor vendor on visual inspections of nozzles with Alloy 600/82/182 material, actions you have taken or plan to take regarding vendor recommendations, and the basis for any recommendations that are not followed.
9. Provide the basis for concluding that the inspections and evaluations described in your responses to the above questions comply with your plant Technical Specifications and Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), Section 50.55(a), which incorporates Section XI of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Code by reference. Specifically, address how your boric acid corrosion control program complies with ASME Section XI, paragraph IWA-5250 (b) on corrective actions. Include a description of the procedures used to implement the corrective actions.

Table A. Template for Response to RAIs

Component	Inspection Techniques	Personnel Qualifications	Extent of Coverage	Frequency	Degree of Insulation Removal/Insulation Type	Corrective Action