

November 13, 2002

Mr. J. T. Gasser
Vice President - Farley Project
Southern Nuclear Operating
Company, Inc.
Post Office Box 1295
Birmingham, Alabama 35201-1295

SUBJECT: VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNIT 2 - RESPONSE TO NRC BULLETIN 2002-02, "REACTOR PRESSURE VESSEL HEAD AND VESSEL HEAD PENETRATION NOZZLE INSPECTION PROGRAMS" (TAC NO. MB5935)

Dear Mr. Gasser:

On August 9, 2002, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued Bulletin 2002-02, "Reactor Pressure Vessel Head and Vessel Head Penetration Nozzle Inspection Programs." The Bulletin requested addressees to provide information related to their reactor pressure vessel (RPV) head and vessel head penetration (VHP) nozzle inspection programs for their respective facilities, including a summary discussion of inspection program plans to supplement their required visual inspections with non-visual nondestructive examination methods, or justification for reliance on visual examinations as the primary method to detect degradation. Addressees were requested to respond to Item 1 of the Bulletin within 30 days of its issuance, or within 15 days of issuance of the Bulletin provide an alternative course of action, including the basis for acceptability of the proposed action.

By letter dated September 5, 2002, you provided a response to Item 1 of the Bulletin, indicating the plans to perform RPV head and VHP nozzle inspections at Vogtle Unit 2. The response also indicated that Vogtle Unit 2 is in the category of plants considered to have low susceptibility to RPV head and VHP cracking, based on a susceptibility ranking of less than 8 effective degradation years.

The NRC staff has reviewed your response to Item 1 of the Bulletin. The NRC staff finds your immediate inspection plan to perform a 100 percent bare metal visual examination during the October 2002 refueling outage to be adequate for providing reasonable assurance that existing regulatory requirements are met.

The NRC staff notes that your justification for reliance on visual examinations and long-term inspection plans refer to the Electric Power Research Institute Materials Reliability Program (MRP) inspection plan for pressurized water reactor RPV upper head penetrations. The NRC staff has not completed its review of the MRP inspection plan and, as such, has not made a determination on the adequacy of the program for ensuring applicable regulatory requirements are met. The NRC staff's assessment of your justification and the adequacy of your long-term inspection program plans will be determined upon completion of the NRC staff's review of the MRP proposed inspection plan.

Mr. J. T. Gasser

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Also, please note that as stated in Item 2 of the Bulletin, you are to report to the Commission your inspection scope and results within 30 days after plant restart following the inspection of the RPV head and VHP nozzles.

Please contact me at (301) 415-1447, if you have any questions on this issue.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Frank Rinaldi, Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-425

cc: See next page

Mr. J. T. Gasser

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Vogtle Electric Generating Plant

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