



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC ISSUES CONFIRMATORY ACTION LETTER ON DAVIS-BESSE; SCHEDULES MEETINGS; ESTABLISHES WEB LINK FOR INFO ON REACTOR VESSEL DEGRADATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL) to FirstEnergy Nuclear Corporation confirming the company's commitments regarding actions it will take to evaluate and resolve damage to a small area of the reactor pressure vessel head at the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station.

The plant, located at Oak Harbor, Ohio, shut down February 16 for refueling and maintenance. Inspections revealed a cavity in the top of the reactor pressure vessel (RPV) head that may have been caused by corrosion from boric acid deposits. As announced March 12, the NRC has sent an Augmented Inspection Team to the site to monitor the licensee's investigation and evaluation of the degradation to the reactor pressure vessel head.

The CAL confirms commitments First Energy has made to the NRC to:

- Quarantine components or other material from the RPV head and nozzle penetrations that are deemed necessary to fully address the root cause of the occurrence of degradation.
- Prior to implementation, provide plans for further inspection and data gathering to support determination of the root cause to the NRC for review and comment.
- Determine the root cause of the degradation around the RPV head penetrations, and promptly meet with the NRC to discuss this information.
- Evaluate conditions throughout the reactor coolant system relative to the degradation mechanisms that occurred on the RPV head.
- Obtain NRC review and approval of the repair or modification and testing plans for the RPV head, prior to implementation of those activities.
- Prior to restart, obtain NRC review and approval of any modification and testing activity related to the reactor core or reactivity control systems.
- Prior to the restart of the unit, meet with the NRC to obtain restart approval. During that meeting, the company will discuss its root cause determination, extent of condition evaluations, and corrective actions completed and planned to repair the damage and prevent recurrence.

- Provide a plan and schedule to the NRC, within 15 days of the date of this letter, for completing and submitting to the NRC the company's ongoing assessment of the safety significance for the RPV head degradation.

Issuance of the CAL does not preclude subsequent issuance of an order formalizing the commitments or requiring other actions on the part of the company.

On March 19, the NRC staff will meet with the representatives from the Nuclear Energy Institute and the Materials Reliability Program to discuss the problem at Davis-Besse and its possible generic implications. The meeting is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Room T-8A-1 of the agency's Two White Flint North Building, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland. Representatives from NEI will present preliminary results of a survey of potentially affected utilities undertaken at the request of NRC, which asked for information on the extent of recent visual examinations and tests of reactor pressure vessel heads, as well as plans for conducting such inspections during outages this Spring. The meeting will be open to the public for observation and NRC officials will be available before the meeting is adjourned to answer any questions. The meeting contact is Steve Bloom at (301) 415-1313.

A separate public meeting will be held from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on March 20 with NRC's stakeholders during which the NRC staff will present a briefing on the status of activities regarding the problem at Davis-Besse and solicit comments from the attendees. The meeting will be held in the Commission Conference Room in the lobby of the agency's One White Flint North Building, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland. Arrangements have been made to permit interested individuals to listen to the meeting via telephone by calling: (301) 231-5539 or 1-800-638-8081 and entering passcode 5315# at the prompt. Fifty phone lines will be available. If difficulties are experienced, help will be available in accessing the conference by calling 1-800-368-5642 and requesting operator assistance. Additional details are available by calling Stephen Sands at (301) 415-3154, or Douglas Pickett at (301) 415-1364.

To help keep the public informed of its activities, NRC has established a section on its web site where information about reactor pressure vessel head degradation will be posted and updated, including press releases, documents and correspondence with NRC licensees. The web address is: <http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/ops-experience/vessel-head-degradation.html>

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