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U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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Subject: Duke Energy Corporation

Catawba Nuclear Station Unit 1,2
USNRC License NPF No. 35 and NPF No. 52
USNRC Docket No. 50-413 and 50-414

Plans for Repair of Recirculating Cooling
Water (RC) System Expansion Joints

Reference: Letter from USNRC to Duke Energy Corporation,
Catawba Nuclear Station - NRC Inspection Report
50-413/01-02, 50-414/01-02, February 23, 2001.

Gentlemen:

The purpose of this letter is to outline the plans for repair of the Recirculating Cooling Water (RC) Expansion Joints. This response is in regards to issues discussed during the exit meeting for NRC Inspection 50-413/01-02, 50-414/01-02 on January 26, 2001. These issues, which were not findings, were noted in section 4 of the inspection report. The inspectors were concerned about stress cracking and age-related deterioration of the RC system rubber expansion joints. On each unit there are eight 10-foot diameter expansion joints and two 30-inch diameter expansion joints of concern. At the time of the exit meeting the licensee's plans for repair or replacement of these expansion joints was not complete. However, recent budget and planning meetings have resulted in a clearer picture of the repair plans.

At the end of the last Unit 2 Outage one of the original 10-foot joints on the 2A1 Waterbox developed a small leak. This was repaired using an additional internal "Hydra-Tight" seal that was installed by Universal Utility Services. During the outage an inspection of the joint and similar joints was performed. An engineering calculation (CNC-1206.0006-0001) was developed to

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determine the acceptability of continued operation of the RC system with the original rubber expansion joints installed. The calculation concluded that the continued structural integrity of the joints could be based on leakage with a fairly high degree of certainty. If a leak were to develop that is through wall, this would be considered a sign that the structural strength of the joint had diminished. The joint would then be repaired at the next available opportunity.

Earlier this year a decision was made to repair the eight 10-foot expansion joints and two 30-inch joints on Unit 1 during the next outage (1EOC13), currently scheduled for April 27, 2002. The current plan is to attempt to repair all ten seals. However, the roughness of the coatings on the inside of the RC piping could effect the ability of the Hydra-Tight seals to form a watertight seal. The time required to prepare these surfaces could limit the number of seals completed during the upcoming outage, which is currently scheduled for 18.5 days.

Plans to repair the remaining nine RC expansion joints on Unit 2 are included in the station's long-range plan. However, this repair has not been approved for a particular outage since the budget cycle does not extend to that time frame at present. The next Unit 2 outage is scheduled for March 2003.

The intent of this letter is only to inform the Commission on the current plans for RC expansion joint repair at the Catawba site. This document contains no new commitments.

For additional information contact Tony Jackson at 803-831-3742.

Sincerely,



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