



NRC NEWS

U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC APPROVES RESTART OF SOUTH TEXAS PROJECT UNIT 1 REACTOR

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has determined that the South Texas Project Nuclear Operating Co. has completed all necessary actions for the safe restart of South Texas Project Unit 1 near Bay City, Texas, following repairs to pipes in the bottom of the reactor vessel.

On April 12, while Unit 1 was shut down for a refueling outage, STP staff discovered leaks in two of the 58 pipes where instruments penetrate the bottom of the reactor vessel.

NRC began a Special Inspection at Unit 1 on May 5 to review the circumstances of the discovery, the licensee's root cause analysis and the adequacy of the licensee's repairs. The repair involved removal of the lower portion of the damaged pipe, replacing it with a new pipe that has improved resistance to corrosion, and welding it to the outside of the reactor vessel wall. NRC staff concluded that the repair was acceptable regardless of the cause of the leakage, which is still under investigation.

NRC held a public meeting on the Special Inspection team's findings in Bay City on July 28. A report documenting the team's findings will be completed by August 28, and made publicly available. "We believe that South Texas Project was proactive in identifying the leakage and was thorough and conservative in assessing the potential causes of the leakage and in completing repairs for the leakage," Special Inspection Team leader Russ Bywater reported at the meeting.

Following a review of the licensee's activities, which includes a commitment to implement a continued monitoring program, the NRC has concluded that STP officials have taken all the actions necessary to ensure a safe restart of Unit 1.

"... NRC has concluded that you have taken all necessary actions with respect to the bottom-mounted instrumentation penetration leakage issue to support the safe restart of STP,

Unit 1,” Dwight D. Chamberlain, Region IV Acting Deputy Regional Administrator, said in a letter to STP Nuclear Operating Company officials. “The NRC also concluded that your previous inspections and planned future inspections of STP Unit 2, support the continued safe operation of STP Unit 2.”

NRC resident inspectors at the site and staff in the NRC’s Region IV office in Arlington, TX, will monitor the licensee’s restart activities.

A copy of the letter to STP and accompanying documents is available electronically on the NRC web site at:

<http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/ops-experience/bottom-head-penetration-leakage/bottom-head-penetration-files/07-31-03-se-restart.pdf>

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