

Divider Plate Cracking in Steam Generators

Results of Phase 1: Analysis of Primary Water
Stress Corrosion Cracking and Mechanical Fatigue
in the Alloy 600 Stub Runner to Divider Plate Weld
Material

Non-Proprietary Version

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PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Cracking in steam generator divider plate to stub runner welds has been reported by Electricité de France (EdF) plants. This report describes a conservative detailed analysis of a crack in the divider plate to stub runner weld of a domestic Westinghouse-designed steam generator. The crack growth analysis considers the effects of both mechanical fatigue and primary water stress corrosion cracking (PWSCC). There are no reports of divider plate cracking in the domestic market. The goal of this report is to determine if divider plate cracking is a concern for domestic nuclear power plants with Westinghouse steam generators.

Results and Findings

This report provides a conservative crack and fatigue life estimate analysis. Results show that currently observed cracks in the foreign steam generators are not capable of causing the divider plate to fail in the worst-case domestic steam generator during accident or normal operating conditions. However, it is possible for cracks in the divider plate to increase in both length and depth once they have initiated in the divider plate to stub runner weld. Vertical tubesheet displacement will increase by more than 2% for a crack greater than 64% into the depth of the divider plate for all operational conditions.

Challenges and Objectives

This report is intended for steam generator analysts and engineers in nuclear power. This report is mainly applicable to nuclear power plants that have Westinghouse-designed steam generators, without center stays or floating divider plates. The purpose of this report is to establish if divider plate cracking indications reported in foreign steam generators are a concern for the domestic steam generator fleet. Specifically, the purpose of the analysis is to determine

- the limiting case model of steam generators with respect to divider plate cracking,
- if a crack in the divider plate can increase vertical tubesheet displacements by more than 2%, and
- if a crack in the divider plate can propagate 100% through the weld material.

Applications, Values, and Use

The results in this report will form the basis for future analyses that will mitigate or eliminate the need for divider plate inspections. The details listed herein will also be useful for steam generator engineers to use in writing degradation assessments for future steam generator outage work.

EPRI Perspective

This report is first of a kind. To date there is no other available analysis on the effect of divider plate cracking in Westinghouse steam generators.

Approach

The project team used finite element methods and a first principles engineering mechanics evaluation to determine the effect of a divider plate on the steam generator.

Keywords

Divider Plate

Tubesheet Displacement

Mechanical Fatigue

PWSCC

ABSTRACT

Experience with foreign steam generators suggests that there is a possibility cracks may develop in the divider plate of non-center stayed steam generators due to the presence of Alloy 600 in the stub runner weld material and divider plate.

Current operating experience suggests that the cracks are due to material defects, weld defects, damage due to loose parts in the channel head and Primary Water Stress Corrosion Cracking (PWSCC). The cracks tend to occur in the heat affected zone of the stub runner to divider plate weld and have been observed to run nearly the length of the divider plate (~ 6 feet). As the cracks approach the triple point of the tubesheet-channel head (TS-CH) complex (the junction between the channel head, divider plate and tubesheet) the cracks begin to curve upwards. Current operating experience and non-destructive evaluation of steam generators that have developed these cracks indicates that the cracks remain shallow, in many cases less than 0.10 inch depth, and do not grow deeply into the divider plate.

However, the concern remains as to what effect a crack in the divider plate will have on the structural integrity of the lower steam generator complex. It is also important to develop a basis for understanding any crack propagation mechanism to predict the possibility of a crack running through the thickness of the divider plate if cracks do develop.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1-1
2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS	2-1
3 ANALYSIS OF THE LIMITING STEAM GENERATOR	3-1
3.1 Introduction	3-1
3.2 Preliminary Assessment of Limiting Steam Generator Model	3-5
3.3 2D Finite Element Model Studies	3-13
3.4 3D Finite Element Model Studies	3-15
3.5 2D Finite Element Results	3-21
3.6 3D Finite Element Results	3-27
3.7 Summary of Limiting Steam Generator Finite Element Analysis	3-36
4 FRACTURE CALCULATIONS AND METHODS	4-1
4.1 Method Discussion	4-1
4.2 Summary of Divider Plate Crack Indications	4-6
4.2.1 Indications at Dampierre Unit 1	4-7
4.2.2 Indications at Chinon	4-7
4.2.3 Indications at Saint-Laurent B	4-7
4.2.4 Indications at Gravelines Unit 1	4-8
4.2.5 Conclusions Relative to Crack Geometry in Finite Element and Fracture Analysis	4-8
4.3 Limiting Mechanical and Material Properties	4-9
4.4 Design Basis Information and Estimated Fatigue Life Analysis	4-10
4.5 Results from Finite Element Analysis	4-12
4.6 Fracture Evaluations and Results	4-17
4.6.1 Crack Initiation, Brittle and Plastic Failure of the Divider Plate Cross Section	4-17
4.6.2 Two Dimensional Crack Model Results	4-17
4.6.3 Three Dimensional Crack Model Results	4-17

4.6.4 Life Estimates from Mechanical Cycling and Combined Effects on the Weld	4-18
4.6.5 Fatigue Life Estimate from Combined Corrosive and Mechanical Effects	4-18
5 REFERENCES	5-1
A APPENDIX A: APPROXIMATE MATERIAL MODELING	A-1
Analysis of Thick Perforated Plates using Anisotropic Material Models	A-1

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1 Sketch of the Tubesheet and Channelhead Complex Highlighting the Stub Runner the Region of Observed Cracking	2-3
Figure 2-2 Sketch of the Affected Cross-section in the Divider Plate and Stub Runner	2-3
Figure 2-3 Assumed Crack Geometry in Fracture Analysis	2-4
Figure 3-1 Typical Sketch of a Recent 3D Solid Model of the TS-CH Steam Generator Complex (Channelhead, Divider Plate, Tubesheet and Stub Barrel)	3-4
Figure 3-2 Typical Sketch of Previous Finite Element Solid Model of the TS-CH Steam Generator Complex (Channelhead, Divider Plate, Tubesheet and Stub Barrel) [7]	3-5
Figure 3-3 Radial Channelhead Displacement near the Tubesheet Centerline	3-12
Figure 3-4 Radial Tubesheet Displacement near the Centerline of the Tubesheet	3-12
Figure 3-5 Plot of 2D Boundary Conditions. Showing a pinned central node at top edge ($UX=0$) and pinned nodes at the lower edge ($UY=0$)	3-15
Figure 3-6 Plot of Applied Pressure Load (shown as arrows) on typical 2D Mesh	3-15
Figure 3-7 Screen Capture of 3D Finite Element Mesh, Rear View	3-17
Figure 3-8 Screen Capture of 3D Finite Element Mesh, Front View	3-18
Figure 3-9 Screen Capture of 3D Finite Element Mesh; Close Up of Divider Plate Region (note that there are four elements through the thickness of the divider plate)	3-18
Figure 3-10 Plot of Model 51 Finite Element Solid Model Representation with Stub Runner Region Highlighted	3-19
Figure 3-11 Plot of Model 51 Finite Element Solid Model Representation with Stub Runner Region Suppressed	3-19
Figure 3-12 3D Finite Element Model NOP Boundary Conditions, Front View	3-20
Figure 3-13 3D Finite Element NOP Boundary Conditions, Rear View	3-20
Figure 3-14 Uncracked Model 44F Displacement	3-21
Figure 3-15 Uncracked Model 51 Displacement	3-22
Figure 3-16 8% Cracked Model 44F Displacement	3-22
Figure 3-17 8% Cracked Model 51 Displacement	3-23
Figure 3-18 32% Cracked Model 44F Displacement	3-23
Figure 3-19 32% Cracked Model 51 Displacement	3-24
Figure 3-20 64% Cracked Model 44F Displacement	3-24
Figure 3-21 64% Cracked Model 51 Displacement	3-25
Figure 3-22 96% Cracked Model 44F Displacement	3-25
Figure 3-23 96% Cracked Model 51 Displacement	3-26

Figure 3-24 Plot of VDR for Model 44F and Model 51 as a Function of Crack Depth.	3-26
Figure 3-25 Sketch of Coordinate System and Problem Geometry for Case 30, page 497 of Ref. 15	3-30
Figure 3-26 Sketch of Coordinate System and Problem Geometry for Case 10, Page 513 of Ref. 15	3-30
Figure 3-27 Global Coordinate System with Respect to the Divider Plate in 3D FE Model.....	3-30
Figure 3-28 Plot of the Smooth Fit of the Tubesheet Stiffness Modified and Unmodified Values for the HL Surface Axial Stress Component at the Elevation of the Stub Runner to Divider Plate Weld for the Uncracked NOP Condition.....	3-31
Figure 3-29 Plot of Linear Average Axial Stress Components for the Uncracked Condition at the Elevation of the Stub Runner to Divider Plate Weld in a Model 51 Steam Generator.....	3-32
Figure 3-30 Plot of Divider Plate Factor for a Model 51 SG with Unmodified Tubesheet Stiffness	3-32
Figure 3-31 Plot Divider Plate Factor for a Model 51 SG with Additional Stiffness from the Tubes within the Tubesheet	3-33
Figure 3-32 64% Cracked NOP Vertical Displacement Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified.....	3-33
Figure 3-33 64% Cracked LOL Vertical Displacement Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified.....	3-34
Figure 3-34 64% Cracked FLB Vertical Displacement Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified.....	3-34
Figure 3-35 64% cracked NOP stress intensity contours plotted on the deformed model configuration with maximum and minimum location identified.....	3-35
Figure 3-36 64% Cracked LOL Stress Intensity Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified	3-35
Figure 3-37 64% Cracked FLB Stress Intensity Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified	3-36
Figure 3-38 Plot of the Percent Increase in Maximum Vertical Tubesheet Displacements as a Function of the Percent Increase in Crack Depth in the Divider Plate	3-37
Figure 4-1 Assumed 2D Specimen Geometry with a Thickness, t , and Edge Crack with Far Field Tension	4-5
Figure 4-2 Crack Growth Rate Estimates using Model Fit from EdF Data [33].....	4-14
Figure 4-3 Comparison of Hot Leg and Cold Leg Surface Stresses from 3D Finite Element Model at the Elevation of the Stub Runner Weld at NOP Conditions	4-14
Figure 4-4 Plot of the Average Axial Stress at the Elevation of the Stub Runner Weld for the NOP, LOL and FLB Conditions.....	4-15
Figure 4-5 Plot of 2D Stress Intensity as a Function of Crack Length for a 1000 psi Pressure Differential Across the TS.....	4-20
Figure 4-6 Plot of Stress Intensity in the Vicinity of the Crack Tip During NOP as a Function of Tubesheet Radius.....	4-21
Figure 4-7 Plot of Average Stress Intensity as a Function of Percent Crack Depth	4-21
Figure 4-8 Plot of Cycles to Failure as a Function of Crack Length for Different R Ratio.....	4-22

Figure 4-9 Comparison of Estimated Fatigue Life during Normal Operation for a Divider Plate with an Initial 0.16 inch Deep Crack Using Data from 3D FEA Studies and PWSCC Data from [31]	4-23
Figure 4-10 Plot of Cycles to Failure as a Function of R Ratio for Different Operating Conditions Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Deep Crack in the Divider Plate	4-23
Figure 4-11 Plot of Cycle Safety Margin as a Function of Percent Crack Depth in the Divider Plate during Normal Operation for an Average Number of Events during a Calendar Year	4-24
Figure 4-12 Plot of Cycles to Failure as a Function of R Ratio for Different Operating Conditions Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Deep Crack in the Divider Plate	4-24
Figure A-1 Tube Plate Hole Penetration Pattern	A-5

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 Summary of Estimated Fatigue Life of a Cracked Divider Plate during NOP Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Crack Depth	2-4
Table 3-1 Table of Materials and Material Models in 2D and 3D FEM.....	3-3
Table 3-2 Table of Unmodified Model 44F and 51 Material Properties at 600 °F.....	3-4
Table 3-3 List of Potentially Limiting Steam Generators and Models with Stub Runner to Divider Plate Welds and Alloy 600/182 Weld Material	3-8
Table 3-4 List of Drawings used to Find General Dimensions for FE Models	3-9
Table 3-5 Summary of Tube Materials in SG Models	3-9
Table 3-6 Model 51 Drawing Data	3-9
Table 3-7 Model 44F and F Drawing Data	3-9
Table 3-8 Model 51F and 54F Drawing Data	3-10
Table 3-9 List of Minimum Material Divider Plate Thickness	3-10
Table 3-10 Summary of Calculated Vertical Displacements	3-10
Table 3-11 List of Tube and Tubesheet Properties	3-11
Table 3-12 List of Applied Pressures for the Model 51 Steam Generator Model	3-17
Table 3-13 Summary of Model 44F and Model 51 VDR Results	3-27
Table 3-14 Summary of Maximum Vertical Tubesheet Displacements comparing a 100% Through Wall Crack to the Uncracked Condition	3-31
Table 4-1 Summary of Alloy 600 Material Properties	4-12
Table 4-2 Gross Section Stresses from 2D Finite Element Analysis	4-13
Table 4-3 Average Section Stresses from 3D Finite Element Analysis.....	4-13
Table 4-4 Summary of Maximum Vertical Tubesheet Displacements.....	4-13
Table 4-5 Best Estimate Data from Ringhals Unit 3 Hot Leg Safe End Nozzle Weld Crack Specimens	4-13
Table 4-6 Summary of Transient and Design Basis Events for Sequoyah Model 51 Steam Generator [34].....	4-16
Table 4-7 Comparison of Estimated Crack Lengths at Failure during NOP	4-20
Table 4-8 Percent Crack Depth that Exceeds Crack Propagation Threshold Calculated using 2D Methods for a 1000 psi Pressure Differential Across the TS.....	4-20
Table 4-9 Estimated Fatigue Crack Growth using Finite Element, and EdF CGR Data	4-22
Table 4-10 Summary of Estimated Fatigue Life of a Cracked Divider Plate during NOP Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Crack Depth and 1503 Cycles per Calendar Year	4-25
Table A-1 Orthotropic Material Properties	A-4

Table A-2 Modified Orthotropic Material Properties.....	A-4
Table A-3 Unmodified Isotropic Material Properties	A-4

1

INTRODUCTION

There have been several documented cases of cracks and crack indications in the stub runner to divider plate weld in steam generators in operation outside of the United States [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

The function of the divider plate in most Westinghouse steam generators is to provide a separation between the cold and hot legs of the channelhead as the primary water enters the steam generator. The divider plate is not considered a primary pressure boundary [6] in the context of this analysis. In most Model F, Model D and Model 51 steam generators the divider plate is also not considered a structural component of the lower steam generator complex.

In most Model F, Model D and Model 51 Westinghouse pressurized water reactor (PWR) steam generators the divider plate is initially welded to the channelhead and then attached to the tubesheet via a weld to a strip of metal on the primary side of the tubesheet called the stub runner. The weld between the stub runner and the divider plate is subject to bending and tension during regular operation of the steam generator. The tension on the divider plate occurs as the tubesheet bows from the difference between the primary and secondary operating pressures. The bending on the divider plate occurs because there is typically a temperature and a pressure difference between the hot leg and cold leg side of the tubesheet and divider plate [7]. The weld that connects the stub runner and the divider plate in some steam generators consists of Alloy 600 material. This metal is susceptible to primary water stress corrosion cracking (PWSCC).

The purpose of this report is to determine:

- The limiting case model of steam generator with respect to divider plate cracking.
- If a crack in the divider plate can increase vertical tubesheet displacements by more than 2%.
- If a crack in the divider plate can propagate 100% through the weld material.

Cracking in the divider plate is a concern because it affects tubesheet displacements. Tubesheet displacements may directly affect multiple regions in the SG that include such areas as:

- Stresses in the tubesheet-channelhead complex and connections
- Tube stress
- Plug retention/acceptability issues.

The results of the analysis do not specifically include details of divider plate cracking in designs without a stub runner. Cracking in the divider plate to channelhead weld connection is not examined. The effect that any stress increase in the lower steam generator complex due to divider plate degradation may cause is not examined.

2

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Figure 2-1
Sketch of the Tubesheet and Channelhead Complex Highlighting the Stub Runner the
Region of Observed Cracking

Figure 2-2
Sketch of the Affected Cross-section in the Divider Plate and Stub Runner

Figure 2-3
Assumed Crack Geometry in Fracture Analysis

Table 2-1
Summary of Estimated Fatigue Life of a Cracked Divider Plate during NOP Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Crack Depth

3

ANALYSIS OF THE LIMITING STEAM GENERATOR

3.1 Introduction

Table 3-1
Table of Materials and Material Models in 2D and 3D FEM

Table 3-2
Table of Unmodified Model 44F and 51 Material Properties at 600 °F

Figure 3-1
Typical Sketch of a Recent 3D Solid Model of the TS-CH Steam Generator Complex
(Channelhead, Divider Plate, Tubesheet and Stub Barrel)

Figure 3-2
Typical Sketch of Previous Finite Element Solid Model of the TS-CH Steam Generator
Complex (Channelhead, Divider Plate, Tubesheet and Stub Barrel) [7]

3.2 Preliminary Assessment of Limiting Steam Generator Model

Table 3-3
List of Potentially Limiting Steam Generators and Models with Stub Runner to Divider
Plate Welds and Alloy 600/182 Weld Material¹

¹ : Table 3.1-1 is not intended to be a complete listing of all plants that may be susceptible to the divider plate cracking phenomena. It is merely intended to list the potential steam generator models and operating conditions that were considered in this report.

Table 3-4
List of Drawings used to Find General Dimensions for FE Models

Table 3-5
Summary of Tube Materials in SG Models

Table 3-6
Model 51 Drawing Data

Table 3-7
Model 44F and F Drawing Data

Table 3-8
Model 51F and 54F Drawing Data

Table 3-9
List of Minimum Material Divider Plate Thickness

Table 3-10
Summary of Calculated Vertical Displacements

Table 3-11
List of Tube and Tubesheet Properties

Figure 3-3
Radial Channelhead Displacement near the Tubesheet Centerline

Figure 3-4
Radial Tubesheet Displacement near the Centerline of the Tubesheet

3.3 2D Finite Element Model Studies

Figure 3-5

Plot of 2D Boundary Conditions. Showing a pinned central node at top edge ($UX=0$) and pinned nodes at the lower edge ($UY=0$).

Figure 3-6

Plot of Applied Pressure Load (shown as arrows) on typical 2D Mesh.

3.4 3D Finite Element Model Studies

Table 3-12
List of Applied Pressures for the Model 51 Steam Generator Model

Figure 3-7
Screen Capture of 3D Finite Element Mesh, Rear View

Figure 3-8
Screen Capture of 3D Finite Element Mesh, Front View

Figure 3-9
Screen Capture of 3D Finite Element Mesh; Close Up of Divider Plate Region (note that there are four elements through the thickness of the divider plate)

Figure 3-10
Plot of Model 51 Finite Element Solid Model Representation with Stub Runner Region Highlighted

Figure 3-11
Plot of Model 51 Finite Element Solid Model Representation with Stub Runner Region Suppressed

Figure 3-12
3D Finite Element Model NOP Boundary Conditions, Front View

Figure 3-13
3D Finite Element NOP Boundary Conditions, Rear View

3.5 2D Finite Element Results

Figure 3-14
Uncracked Model 44F Displacement

Figure 3-15
Uncracked Model 51 Displacement

Figure 3-16
8% Cracked Model 44F Displacement.

Figure 3-17
8% Cracked Model 51 Displacement

Figure 3-18
32% Cracked Model 44F Displacement.

Figure 3-19
32% Cracked Model 51 Displacement.

Figure 3-20
64% Cracked Model 44F Displacement.

Figure 3-21
64% Cracked Model 51 Displacement.

Figure 3-22
96% Cracked Model 44F Displacement.

Figure 3-23
96% Cracked Model 51 Displacement.

Figure 3-24
Plot of VDR for Model 44F and Model 51 as a Function of Crack Depth.

Table 3-13
Summary of Model 44F and Model 51 VDR Results

3.6 3D Finite Element Results

Figure 3-25
Sketch of Coordinate System and Problem Geometry for Case 30, page 497 of Ref. 15

Figure 3-26
Sketch of Coordinate System and Problem Geometry for Case 10, Page 513 of Ref. 15

Figure 3-27
Global Coordinate System with Respect to the Divider Plate in 3D FE Model

Table 3-14

Summary of Maximum Vertical Tubesheet Displacements comparing a 100% Through Wall Crack to the Uncracked Condition

Figure 3-28

Plot of the Smooth Fit of the Tubesheet Stiffness Modified and Unmodified Values for the HL Surface Axial Stress Component at the Elevation of the Stub Runner to Divider Plate Weld for the Uncracked NOP Condition.

Figure 3-29

Plot of Linear Average Axial Stress Components for the Uncracked Condition at the Elevation of the Stub Runner to Divider Plate Weld in a Model 51 Steam Generator.

Figure 3-30

Plot of Divider Plate Factor for a Model 51 SG with Unmodified Tubesheet Stiffness

Figure 3-31
Plot Divider Plate Factor for a Model 51 SG with Additional Stiffness from the Tubes within the Tubesheet

Figure 3-32
64% Cracked NOP Vertical Displacement Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified.

Figure 3-33

64% Cracked LOL Vertical Displacement Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified.

Figure 3-34

64% Cracked FLB Vertical Displacement Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified.

Figure 3-35
64% cracked NOP stress intensity contours plotted on the deformed model configuration with maximum and minimum location identified.

Figure 3-36
64% Cracked LOL Stress Intensity Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified

Figure 3-37
64% Cracked FLB Stress Intensity Contours Plotted on the Deformed Model Configuration
with Maximum and Minimum Location Identified

3.7 Summary of Limiting Steam Generator Finite Element Analysis

Figure 3-38
Plot of the Percent Increase in Maximum Vertical Tubesheet Displacements as a Function
of the Percent Increase in Crack Depth in the Divider Plate

4

FRACTURE CALCULATIONS AND METHODS

4.1 Method Discussion

Figure 4-1
Assumed 2D Specimen Geometry with a Thickness, t , and Edge Crack with Far Field Tension

4.2 Summary of Divider Plate Crack Indications

A list of steam generators in the foreign nuclear fleet reported to have divider plate cracking is given in the table below.

4.2.1 Indications at Dampierre Unit 1

4.2.2 Indications at Chinon

4.2.3 Indications at Saint-Laurent B

4.2.4 Indications at Gravelines Unit 1

4.2.5 Conclusions Relative to Crack Geometry in Finite Element and Fracture Analysis

4.3 Limiting Mechanical and Material Properties

4.4 Design Basis Information and Estimated Fatigue Life Analysis

4.5 Results from Finite Element Analysis

Table 4-1
Summary of Alloy 600 Material Properties

Table 4-2
Gross Section Stresses from 2D Finite Element Analysis

Table 4-3
Average Section Stresses from 3D Finite Element Analysis

Table 4-4
Summary of Maximum Vertical Tubesheet Displacements

Table 4-5
Best Estimate Data from Ringhals Unit 3 Hot Leg Safe End Nozzle Weld Crack Specimens

Figure 4-2
Crack Growth Rate Estimates using Model Fit from EdF Data [33]

Figure 4-3
Comparison of Hot Leg and Cold Leg Surface Stresses from 3D Finite Element Model at the Elevation of the Stub Runner Weld at NOP Conditions

Figure 4-4
Plot of the Average Axial Stress at the Elevation of the Stub Runner Weld for the NOP, LOL
and FLB Conditions

Table 4-6
Summary of Transient and Design Basis Events for Sequoyah Model 51 Steam Generator [34]

4.6 Fracture Evaluations and Results

4.6.1 Crack Initiation, Brittle and Plastic Failure of the Divider Plate Cross Section

4.6.2 Two Dimensional Crack Model Results

4.6.3 Three Dimensional Crack Model Results

4.6.4 Life Estimates from Mechanical Cycling and Combined Effects on the Weld

4.6.5 Fatigue Life Estimate from Combined Corrosive and Mechanical Effects

Table 4-7
Comparison of Estimated Crack Lengths at Failure during NOP

Table 4-8
Percent Crack Depth that Exceeds Crack Propagation Threshold Calculated using 2D
Methods for a 1000 psi Pressure Differential Across the TS

Figure 4-5
Plot of 2D Stress Intensity as a Function of Crack Length for a 1000 psi Pressure
Differential Across the TS

Figure 4-6
Plot of Stress Intensity in the Vicinity of the Crack Tip During NOP as a Function of Tubesheet Radius

Figure 4-7
Plot of Average Stress Intensity as a Function of Percent Crack Depth

Table 4-9
Estimated Fatigue Crack Growth using Finite Element, and EdF CGR Data

=

Figure 4-8
Plot of Cycles to Failure as a Function of Crack Length for Different R Ratio

Figure 4-9
Comparison of Estimated Fatigue Life during Normal Operation for a Divider Plate with an Initial 0.16 inch Deep Crack Using Data from 3D FEA Studies and PWSCC Data from [31]

Figure 4-10
Plot of Cycles to Failure as a Function of R Ratio for Different Operating Conditions Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Deep Crack in the Divider Plate

Figure 4-11

Plot of Cycle Safety Margin as a Function of Percent Crack Depth in the Divider Plate during Normal Operation for an Average Number of Events during a Calendar Year

Figure 4-12

Plot of Cycles to Failure as a Function of R Ratio for Different Operating Conditions Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Deep Crack in the Divider Plate

Table 4-10

Summary of Estimated Fatigue Life of a Cracked Divider Plate during NOP Assuming an Initial 0.16 inch Crack Depth and 1503 Cycles per Calendar Year

5

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APPENDIX A: APPROXIMATE MATERIAL MODELING

Analysis of Thick Perforated Plates using Anisotropic Material Models

Table A-1
Orthotropic Material Properties

Table A-2
Modified Orthotropic Material Properties

Table A-3
Unmodified Isotropic Material Properties

Figure A-1
Tube Plate Hole Penetration Pattern