



UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND APPLIED SCIENCE
CHARLOTTESVILLE, 22901

DEPARTMENT OF NUCLEAR ENGINEERING AND ENGINEERING PHYSICS
REACTOR FACILITY

TELEPHONE 804-924-7136

Sept. 6, 1979

Mr. James P. O'Reilly, Director
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission - Region II
101 Marietta St N.W. Suite 3100
Atlanta, GA 30303

Re: NRC letter RII: EHW 50-62/79-01 50-396/79-01

Gentlemen:

This letter responds to the item of noncompliance identified in the reference letter as required by 10 CFR 2.201.

The item of noncompliance concerned the method used to calibrate the power range instruments. Specifically, the procedure required that the instrument readings be compared to the power determined using a primary system heat balance while operating at 100% power ($2mw_t$). During the period of time noted in the inspectors report this heat balance calibration was performed at 87.5% of full power ($1.75 Mw_t$) instead of 100% power as specified by the procedure.

The use of the lower power during the heat balance calibration was necessitated by the requirements of the long term irradiation of pressure vessel steels being performed as a part of a research project. The higher gamma heating of the steel specimens associated with full power operation is undesirable for even a short period of time. In addition, removal of the experiment from the reactor on a weekly basis to allow full power operation would increase the radiation exposure to the Facility Staff.

While the item cited was not in full compliance with the procedure, we consider that it did not adversely affect the safe operation of the reactor. The actual procedure did confirm that the power range monitors were operable and showing acceptable response to a known value of reactor power.

Based on a review of the inspectors findings we have taken the following actions:

1. From the week of July 16, 1979 through the week of August 20, 1979 the weekly heat balance calibrations were performed at 100% power as specified by the procedure. The experiment was not being irradiated during this period.
- 2.. During the week of August 27, 1979 a change to the procedure was approved which allows performance of the heat balance at less than 100% power if necessitated by experimental limitations. This procedure provides an acceptable calibration of the power range instrumentation.

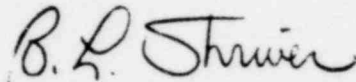
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3. All reactor operators and senior operators have been requested to review the technical specifications and reactor operating procedures to ensure that they know the operating requirements and that they are followed. Possible changes to the operator requalification program will also be considered to strengthen this area.

Based on these actions we believe that we are in full compliance as of this date and that additional, similar items of noncompliance will not occur in the future.

Sincerely,



B. L. Shriver, Director
Reactor Facility

BLS/mgs

cc: Mr. R. C. Lewis, Acting Chief
Reactor Operations and Nuclear Support Branch
NRC - Region II

Mr. E. H. Webster
NRC - Region II

Mr. Steve Ramos
Division of Reactor Licensing
NRC - Washington D.C.

Mr. J. P. Farrar

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