January 20, 2005

Mr. Rick A. Muench
President and Chief Nuclear Officer
Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation
P.O. Box 411
Burlington, KS 66839

SUBJECT: WOLF CREEK GENERATING STATION - RESPONSE TO NRC BULLETIN 2003-02, "LEAKAGE FROM REACTOR PRESSURE VESSEL LOWER HEAD PENETRATIONS AND REACTOR COOLANT PRESSURE BOUNDARY INTEGRITY" (TAC NO. MC0577)

Dear Mr. Muench:

On August 21, 2003, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issued NRC Bulletin 2003-02, "Leakage from Reactor Pressure Vessel Lower Head Penetrations and Reactor Coolant Pressure Boundary Integrity," to the industry. This Bulletin informed addressees that current methods of inspecting the reactor pressure vessel (RPV) lower heads may need to be supplemented with bare-metal visual inspections in order to detect reactor coolant pressure boundary leakage and requested these addressees provide the NRC with information related to inspections that have been performed to verify the integrity of the RPV lower head penetrations.

The Bulletin requested that addressees provide a description of the RPV lower head penetration inspection program that would be implemented at their respective plants during the next and subsequent refueling outages. This description was to include the extent of the inspection, the inspection methods to be used, the qualification standards for the inspection methods, the process used to resolve the source of findings of boric acid deposits or corrosion, the inspection documentation to be generated, and the basis for concluding that their plant satisfied applicable regulatory requirements related to the structural and leakage integrity of the RPV lower head penetrations.

By letter dated September 19, 2003 (WM 03-0044), Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation (WCNOC) provided its response to the Bulletin request above for the Wolf Creek Generating Station (WCGS). As stated in its attachment to the letter, WCNOC committed to use VT-2 examination techniques to perform a 100 percent circumferential examination of all penetration tubing below the lower RPV head (58 total penetrations), 100 percent circumferential examination of the annulus region between the lower RPV head and the penetration tubing, and 100 percent examination of the lower head surface, during the Fall 2003 refueling outage. As noted in its submittal, WCNOC indicated that these examinations, described above, are expected to be performed during subsequent refueling outages, beyond the Fall 2003 outage.

The Bulletin also requested that addressees provide a summary of the RPV lower head penetration inspection that was performed at their plants, the extent of the inspection and the methods used, a description of the as-found condition of the lower head, any findings of relevant indications of through-wall leakage, and a summary of the disposition of any findings of boric acid deposits and any corrective actions taken as a result of indications found.

By letter dated January 22, 2004 (WM 04-0002), WCNOC provided a summary of its inspection results during the Fall 2003 refueling outage at WCGS. WCNOC reported it had performed a visual inspection on 100 percent of the RPV lower head surface below the bottom hemispherical weld, including the annulus region between the penetration tubing and the RPV lower head. WCNOC did not observe any evidence of penetration leakage or material wastage.

Based on its review of WCNOC's responses to NRC Bulletin 2003-02 in its letters dated September 19, 2003, and January 22, 2004, the NRC staff finds that WCNOC has met the reporting requirements of the Bulletin for WCGS. Accordingly, TAC No. MC0577 is closed.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Jack Donohew, Senior Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate IV
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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The Bulletin also requested that addressees provide a summary of the RPV lower head penetration inspection that was performed at their plants, the extent of the inspection and the methods used, a description of the as-found condition of the lower head, any findings of relevant indications of through-wall leakage, and a summary of the disposition of any findings of boric acid deposits and any corrective actions taken as a result of indications found.

By letter dated January 22, 2004 (WM 04-0002), WCNOC provided a summary of its inspection results during the Fall 2003 refueling outage at WCGS. WCNOC reported it had performed a visual inspection on 100 percent of the RPV lower head surface below the bottom hemispherical weld, including the annulus region between the penetration tubing and the RPV lower head. WCNOC did not observe any evidence of penetration leakage or material wastage.

Based on its review of WCNOC's responses to NRC Bulletin 2003-02 in its letters dated September 19, 2003, and January 22, 2004, the NRC staff finds that WCNOC has met the reporting requirements of the Bulletin for WCGS. Accordingly, TAC No. MC0577 is closed.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Jack Donohew, Senior Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate IV
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-482

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