Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station
NRC UPDATE

February 2005

NRC's inspections completed during mid-cycle outage

FirstEnergy recently completed a mid-cycle outage at Davis-Besse, performing NRC-required inspections of the replacement reactor vessel head, the reactor vessel bottom, and the steam generators.

An NRC inspector observed and evaluated Davis-Besse's visual inspections of upper and lower vessel head for leakage, as required by the Order issued by the NRC before the plan's restart. No evidence of leakage was detected.

NRC inspectors also observed and evaluated the utility's inspections of the plant's steam generators. The utility expanded the scope of this inspection after initial examinations of a sample of steam generator tubes revealed flaws. The flawed tubes were plugged or repaired.

Other utility inspections of piping and components were also review by the NRC inspectors.

A report of the NRC inspection (Report No. 50-346/05-03) will be issued in mid-March and will be available on the NRC web site.

First round of independent assessments completed

FirstEnergy has completed the last of four independent assessments required by a Confirmatory Order, issued by the NRC to FirstEnergy as part of its authorization to resume operations at Davis-Besse. The Order requires the utility to conduct independent assessments of four key areas at the plant: operations performance, corrective action program, engineering program effectiveness, and organizational safety culture, including safety conscious work environment.

These assessments are to be conducted each year for a five-year period.

NRC Resident Inspection Staff

Three fully qualified resident inspectors are assigned to the Davis-Besse site on a full-time basis. The normal complement for a reactor site is two inspectors, but a third inspector was added in September 2003 to provide additional oversight. All three inspectors and their families live in the vicinity of the Davis-Besse plant.

Christopher S. "Scott" Thomas has been the senior resident inspector at Davis-Besse since January 2002. He previously was a resident inspector at the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station in Minnesota. Scott specialized in nuclear engineering with the U.S. Navy for 15 years before joining the NRC. He holds a master's degree in environmental engineering.

John E. "Jack" Rutkowski was assigned as a resident inspector at Davis-Besse in June 2003. Prior to joining the NRC in 2002, Jack held a wide range of technical and management positions in the nuclear industry. He also served in the U.S. Navy. He holds a master's degree in nuclear science and engineering and a master's degree in business administration.

Monica P. Salter-Williams became the third member of the resident inspection staff in September 2003, coming to Davis-Besse from the NRC's Region I office. She was previously an engineer at a nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania. Monica has a master's degree in nuclear engineering from Pennsylvania State University and a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Georgia State University.

Nancy Keller is the resident office assistant. She has been the administrative backbone of the NRC resident inspectors' office since 1994.

The operations, corrective action program, and engineering assessments are available on the NRC's Davis-Besse web site. The organizational safety culture assessment was completed in late December, and the report is expected to be available to the public in March.

Web-based access restored for NRC online document library

Documents in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's online documents library known as ADAMS are available again through a convenient, user-friendly web-based access tool.

On Oct. 25 the NRC suspended public access to the ADAMS online library and some other parts of its web site to review documents and remove any that could reasonably be expected to aid a potential terrorist. The agency previously restored access to non-sensitive reactor documents using Citrix software.

Beginning in early February, users may access documents directly from the NRC web site, rather than only through Citrix. This web-based ADAMS, which was initially available in January 2003, features basic and advanced search options for users to search and retrieve files of publicly available documents.

Davis-Besse documents can easily be found using the docket number 05000346 as a search criterion.

NRC Issues Inspection Reports

It's been close to a year since Davis-Besse resumed operations after its two-year outage. Enough operational data has been gathered for performance indicators to become meaningful measures of the plant's safety performance. Since Davis-Besse's restart in March 2004, NRC resident inspectors have been conducting additional inspections in areas normally evaluated through performance indicator statistics. Now, with the performance indicators considered valid measurements, the NRC resident inspectors will redirect this inspection effort to other safety-significant areas of plant operation and performance.

NRC Davis-Besse Web Site

Due to an updating of the NRC web site, the link to Davis-Besse documents and information has been changed. It is now available on the NRC Nuclear Reactors page. On the web site: http://www.nrc.gov - select 'Nuclear Reactors' from the blue tabs at the top of the page. The Davis-Besse link is listed among the key topics at the right of the reactors page.

Integrated Resident Inspection (Report No. 50-346/04-16, issued February 11, 2005) reviewed the results of seven weeks of inspection by the NRC resident inspectors. No significant findings were identified.

Special Emergency Preparedness Inspection - Discrepant Alert and Notification System Performance Indicator Data (Report No. 50-346/04-18, issued January 13, 2005) reviewed the utility's activities in response to the testing failure of the Alert and Notification System, especially with respect to the reporting requirements of the performance indicator program. NRC inspectors identified an apparent violation of NRC regulations in that the utility submitted discrepant Alert and Notification System Performance Indicator data for the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2004. The inspection also found that the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department lost the capability of activating all 54 sirens in the Emergency Planning Zone for a period of 10 days. This issue has been preliminary determined to be one of low-to-moderate safety significance. Further action by the NRC on these two issues is pending.

Problem Identification and Resolution Inspection (Report No. 50-346/04-17, issued January 30, 2004) evaluated the plant staff's ability to identify and characterize problems and to resolve them. No significant findings requiring further NRC action were identified.

Integrated Resident Inspection (Report No. 50-346/04-15, issued December 20, 2004) reviewed the results of seven weeks of inspection by the NRC resident inspectors. NRC inspectors identified a violation of NRC regulations: the utility failed to perform an adequate safety evaluation review for changes made to the facility.

Public Participation in the Process

The NRC's experience is that members of the public, including public officials and citizens, often raise questions or provide insights that are important to consider. If you have questions or want to provide information or a point of view, please contact us. For feedback on this newsletter, contact Viktoria Mitlyng 630/829-9662 or Jan Strasma 630/829-9663 (toll free 800/522-3025 - ext -9662 or -9663). E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov. Extensive information about the Davis-Besse reactor vessel head damage and the ensuing activities is available on the NRC web site: http://www.nrc.gov - first select the Nuclear Reactors tab at the top of the page and then select "Davis-Besse" under the list of key topics.