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Dated: July 18, 2003.

**Mary Ann Hadyka,**

*Committee Management Officer.*

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## NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-315]

### Indiana Michigan Power Company, Donald C. Cook Nuclear Plant, Unit 1; Exemption

#### 1.0 Background

Indiana Michigan Power Company (the licensee) is the holder of Facility Operating License No. DPR-58 which authorizes operation of the Donald C. Cook (D.C. Cook) Nuclear Plant, Unit 1. The licensee provides, among other things, that the facility is subject to all rules, regulations, and orders of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC, the Commission) now or hereafter in effect.

The facility consists of a pressurized water reactor located in Stevensville, Michigan.

#### 2.0 Request/Action

Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), part 50, Appendix G requires that pressure-temperature (P-T) limits be established for reactor pressure vessels (RPVs) during normal operating and hydrostatic or leak rate testing conditions. Specifically, Appendix G to 10 CFR part 50 states that "[t]he appropriate requirements on \* \* \* the pressure-temperature limits and minimum permissible temperature must be met for all conditions." Further, Appendix G of 10 CFR part 50 specifies that the requirements for these limits are based on the application of evaluation procedures given in Appendix G to section XI of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code (Code). In this exemption, consistent with the current provisions of 10 CFR 50.55(a), all references to the ASME Code denote the

1995 Edition through the 1996 Addenda of the ASME Code.

In order to address provisions of amendments to the D.C. Cook, Unit 1, Technical Specification (TS) P-T limit curves, the licensee requested in its submittal dated December 10, 2002, that the NRC staff exempt D.C. Cook, Unit 1, from application of specific requirements of Appendix G to 10 CFR part 50, and substitute the use of ASME Code Case N-641. ASME Code Case N-641 permits the use of an alternate reference fracture toughness curve for RPV materials and permits the postulation of a circumferentially-oriented flaw for the evaluation of circumferential RPV welds when determining the P-T limits. The proposed exemption request is consistent with, and is needed to support, the D.C. Cook, Unit 1, TS amendment that was contained in the same submittal. The proposed D.C. Cook, Unit 1, TS amendment will revise the P-T limits for heatup, cooldown, and inservice test limitations for the reactor coolant system (RCS) through 32 effective full power years of operation.

#### *Code Case N-641*

The licensee has proposed an exemption to allow the use of ASME Code Case N-641 in conjunction with Appendix G to ASME section XI, 10 CFR 50.60(a) and 10 CFR part 50, Appendix G, to establish the P-T limits for the D.C. Cook, Unit 1 RPV.

The proposed TS amendment to revise the P-T limits for D.C. Cook, Unit 1, relies in part, on the requested exemption. These revised P-T limits have been developed using the lower bound  $K_{IC}$  fracture toughness curve shown in ASME section XI, Appendix A, Figure A-2200-1, in lieu of the lower bound  $K_{IA}$  fracture toughness curve of ASME section XI, Appendix G, Figure G-2210-1, as the basis fracture toughness curve for defining the D.C. Cook Unit 1 P-T limits. In addition, the revised P-T limits have been developed based on the use of a postulated circumferentially-oriented flaw for the evaluation of RPV circumferential welds in lieu of the axially-oriented flaw which would be required by Appendix G to section XI of the ASME Code. The other margins involved with the ASME section XI, Appendix G process of determining P-T limit curves remain unchanged.

Use of the  $K_{IC}$  curve as the basis fracture toughness curve for the development of P-T operating limits is more technically correct than use of the  $K_{IA}$  curve. The  $K_{IC}$  curve appropriately implements the use of a relationship based on static initiation fracture

toughness behavior to evaluate the controlled heatup and cooldown process of a RPV, whereas the  $K_{IA}$  fracture toughness curve codified into Appendix G to section XI of the ASME Code was developed from more conservative crack arrest and dynamic fracture toughness test data. The application of the  $K_{IA}$  fracture toughness curve was initially codified in Appendix G to section XI of the ASME Code in 1974 to provide a conservative representation of RPV material fracture toughness. This initial conservatism was necessary due to the limited knowledge of RPV material behavior in 1974. However, additional information has been gained about RPV materials which demonstrates that the lower bound on fracture toughness provided by the  $K_{IA}$  fracture toughness curve is well beyond the margin of safety required to protect the public health and safety from potential RPV failure.

Likewise, the use of a postulated circumferentially-oriented flaw in lieu of an axially-oriented one for the evaluation of a circumferential RPV weld is more technically correct. The flaw size required to be postulated for P-T limit determination has a depth of one-quarter of the RPV wall thickness and a length six times the depth. Based on the direction of welding during the fabrication process, the only technically reasonable orientation for such a large flaw is for the plane of the flaw to be circumferentially-oriented (*i.e.*, parallel to the direction of welding). Prior to the development of ASME Code Case N-641 (and the similar ASME Code Case N-588), the required postulation of an axially-oriented flaw for the evaluation of a circumferential RPV weld provided an additional, unnecessary level of conservatism to the overall evaluation.

In addition, P-T limit curves based on the  $K_{IC}$  fracture toughness curve and postulation of a circumferentially-oriented flaw for the evaluation of RPV circumferential welds will enhance overall plant safety by opening the P-T operating window with the greatest safety benefit in the region of low temperature operations. The operating window through which the operator heats up and cools down the RCS, is determined by the difference between the maximum allowable pressure determined by Appendix G of ASME section XI, and the minimum required pressure for the reactor coolant pump seals adjusted for instrument uncertainties. A narrow operating window could potentially have an adverse safety impact by increasing the possibility of inadvertent overpressure protection system actuation due to pressure surges associated with normal