

4. A new § 50.66 is added under the center heading "Issuance, Limitations, and Conditions of Licenses and Construction Permits" to read as follows:

§ 50.66 Requirements for thermal annealing of the reactor pressure vessel.

(a) For those light water nuclear power reactors where neutron radiation has reduced the fracture toughness of the reactor vessel materials, a thermal annealing may be applied to the reactor vessel to recover the fracture toughness of the material. The use of a thermal annealing treatment is subject to the requirements in this section. A report describing the licensee's plan for conducting the thermal annealing must be submitted in accordance with § 50.4 at least three years prior to the date at which the limiting fracture toughness criteria in § 50.61 or Appendix G to Part 50 would be exceeded. Within three years of the submittal of the Thermal Annealing Report and at least thirty days prior to the start of the thermal annealing, the NRC will review the Thermal Annealing Report and place the results of its evaluation in its Public Document Room. The licensee may begin the thermal anneal after:

(1) Submitting the Thermal Annealing Report required by paragraph (b) of this section;

(2) the NRC places the results of its evaluation of the Thermal Annealing Report in the Public Document Room; and

(3) the requirements of paragraph (f)(1) of this section have been satisfied.

(b) Thermal Annealing Report. The Thermal Annealing Report must include: a Thermal Annealing Operating Plan; a Requalification Inspection and Test Program; a Fracture Toughness Recovery and Reembrittlement Trend Assurance Program; and Identification of Unreviewed Safety Questions and Technical Specification Changes.

(1) Thermal Annealing Operating Plan.

The thermal annealing operating plan must include:

(i) A detailed description of the pressure vessel and all structures and components that are expected to experience significant thermal or stress effects during the thermal annealing operation;

(ii) An evaluation of the effects of mechanical and thermal stresses and temperatures on the vessel, containment, biological shield, attached piping and appurtenances, and adjacent equipment and components to demonstrate that operability of the reactor will not be detrimentally affected. This evaluation must include:

(A) Detailed thermal and structural analyses to establish the time and temperature profile of the annealing operation. These analyses must include heatup and cooldown rates, and must demonstrate that localized temperatures, thermal stress gradients, and subsequent residual stresses will not result in unacceptable dimensional changes or distortions in the vessel, attached piping and appurtenances, and that the thermal annealing cycle will not result in unacceptable degradation of the fatigue life of these components.

(B) The effects of localized high temperatures on degradation of the concrete adjacent to the vessel and changes in thermal and mechanical properties, if any, of the reactor vessel insulation, and on detrimental effects, if any, on containment and the biological shield. If the design temperature limitations for the adjacent concrete structure are to be exceeded during the thermal annealing operation, an acceptable maximum temperature for the concrete must be established for the annealing operation using appropriate test data.

(iii) The methods, including heat source, instrumentation and procedures proposed for performing the thermal annealing. This shall include any special precautions necessary to minimize occupational exposure, in accordance with the As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) principle and the provisions of § 20.1206.

(iv) The proposed thermal annealing operating parameters, including bounding conditions for temperatures and times, and heatup and cooldown schedules.

(A) The thermal annealing time and temperature parameters selected must be based on projecting sufficient recovery of fracture toughness, using the procedures of paragraph (e) of this section, to satisfy the requirements of § 50.60 and § 50.61 for the proposed period of operation addressed in the application.

(B) The time and temperature parameters evaluated as part of the thermal annealing operating plan, and supported by the evaluation results of paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section, represent the bounding times and temperatures for the thermal annealing operation. If these bounding conditions for times and temperatures are violated during the thermal annealing operation, then the annealing operation is considered not in accordance with the Thermal Annealing Operating Plan, as required by paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the licensee must comply with paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(2) Requalification Inspection and Test Program. The inspection and test program to requalify the annealed reactor vessel must include the detailed monitoring, inspections, and tests proposed to demonstrate that the limitations on temperatures, times and temperature profiles, and stresses evaluated for the proposed thermal annealing conditions of paragraph (b)(1)(iv) of this section have not been exceeded, and to determine the thermal annealing time and temperature to be used in quantifying the fracture toughness recovery. The requalification inspection and test program must demonstrate that the thermal annealing operation has not degraded the reactor vessel, attached piping or appurtenances, or the adjacent concrete structures to a degree that could affect the safe operation of the reactor.

(3) Fracture Toughness Recovery and Reembrittlement Trend Assurance Program. The percent recovery of RT_{NDT} and Charpy upper-shelf energy due to the thermal annealing treatment must be determined based on the time and temperature of the actual vessel thermal anneal. The recovery of RT_{NDT} and Charpy upper-shelf energy provide the basis for establishing the post-anneal RT_{NDT} and Charpy upper-shelf energy for each vessel material. Changes in the RT_{NDT} and Charpy upper-shelf energy with subsequent plant operation must be determined using the post-anneal values of these parameters in conjunction with the projected reembrittlement trend determined in accordance with paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section. Recovery and reembrittlement evaluations shall include:

(i) Recovery Evaluations.

(A) The percent recovery of both RT_{NDT} and Charpy upper-shelf energy must be determined by one of the procedures described in paragraph (e) of this section, using the proposed lower bound thermal annealing time and temperature conditions described in the operating plan.

(B) If the percent recovery is determined from testing surveillance specimens or from testing materials removed from the reactor vessel, then it shall be demonstrated that the proposed thermal annealing parameters used in the test program are equal to or bounded by those used in the vessel annealing operation.

(C) If generic computational methods are used, appropriate justification must be submitted as a part of the application.

(ii) Reembrittlement Evaluations.

(A) The projected post-anneal reembrittlement of RT_{NDT} must be