

N386. Zorita Restart Has Been Approved

Following the completion of repairs to the closure head of the reactor pressure vessel at the end of February and final hydrotesting at the beginning of March, the Consejo de Seguridad Nuclear (CSN) has authorized the restart of the Jose Cabrera plant at Zorita. The 26-years old 153 MWe pressurized water reactor has been shut down since January 1994, when an inspection program discovered some stress corrosion cracking in control rod penetrations on the vessel heads of some French reactor, as well as a number of other small cracks. Subsequent investigation determined that repair rather than vessel head replacement was acceptable.

Although the Spanish inspection program have so far found no penetration cracking on the vessel heads of the Almaraz and Asco reactors, which are of the same vintage as the French plants, Central Nuclear de Almaraz has recently decide to replace the vessel heads on its two 900-MWe PWRs at the same time as the steam generator replacements planned for the 1996 and 1998 outage. This precautionary action is being taken because the equipment hatches of the Almaraz containments are too small to take vessel heads, and therefore, it make sense to take the opportunity of using the larger temporary openings that will have to be cut into the containment walls for the steam generator replacements. Two Asco reactors are taking steam generator replacement this summer and 1997 because of the larger hatches. As a result, a decision on vessel head replacement need only be made if and when any penetration cracking is discovered.

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