

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

No. 98-185

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Tuesday, October 13, 1998)

**NRC ORDER TO STP NUCLEAR OPERATING CO. CONFIRMS FIRE
BARRIER CORRECTIVE ACTIONS AT SOUTH TEXAS PROJECT, UNITS 1 AND 2**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a confirmatory order to the STP Nuclear Operating Company confirming its commitment to complete Thermo-Lag fire barrier corrective actions at its South Texas Project, Units 1 and 2, by December 31. The plant is located in Matagorda County, Texas.

In a letter to STP officials, Sam Collins, Director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, said the order was issued because of concern "that some licensees may not be making adequate progress toward resolving the plant-specific issues, and that some implementation schedules may either be too tenuous or too protracted." The South Texas Project is among them.

Thermo-Lag is a fire barrier material manufactured and supplied by Thermal Science, Inc., of St. Louis, Missouri, and has been used to provide fire resistance to wiring and equipment at nuclear plants. The NRC has been concerned that Thermo-Lag 330-1 fire barrier material installed by some of its licensees may not provide the intended level of fire protection and that licensees thus may not be meeting regulatory requirements. Between 1992 and 1994, the NRC staff issued letters to all nuclear utilities asking licensees to submit plans and schedules for resolving the issue. All licensees with Thermo-Lag fire barriers have implemented around-the-clock "fire watches," using workers to patrol vital plant areas on a regular basis to watch for signs of fire until corrective actions have been completed.

In his letter, Collins noted that NRC has been meeting with licensees to review their progress in completing implementation of their fire barrier programs, but has been concerned about slow progress on resolution of the issue at certain plants.

The STP Nuclear Operating Company is one of the licensees with which NRC has held discussions. The NRC has reviewed the company's schedule for Thermo-Lag corrective actions and concluded they are reasonable. The company has formally agreed to the terms of the confirmatory order. At South Texas, 88 percent of Thermo-Lag corrective actions have been completed at Unit 1, and 99 percent of the work at Unit 2.

About 20 other plants have received similar orders.

##

Additional information on Thermo-Lag fire barriers can be found on the NRC
Homepage at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/gmo/tip/tip9826.htm>

##