

*T.D. R.E. Browning.*

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**NEA PROJECT SUCCESSFULLY REMOVES SAMPLES FROM THE  
DAMAGED THREE MILE ISLAND UNIT-2 REACTOR VESSEL**

Eleven OECD countries under the auspices of the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) successfully completed a project to remove samples from the damaged reactor vessel at the Three Mile Island Unit 2 (TMI-2) nuclear power plant in the United States. Fifteen wedge-shaped samples have been cut from the inner part of the steel wall of the vessel and are being shipped to laboratories in the U.S. and other participating countries for extensive analysis. These samples were removed from locations providing a representative coverage of the extreme conditions of heat and pressure experienced during the reactor accident in 1979. The difficult task of cutting the samples was performed by machinery specifically developed to be operated by remote control under 12m of water.

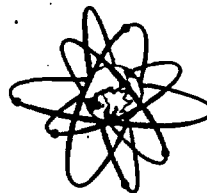
The 3-year, US\$7 million Project was proposed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 1988 after it became apparent that molten material had flowed into the bottom of the pressure vessel, causing severe local overheating. Organisations in 10 other NEA Member countries agreed to join in studies to identify the effects on the reactor vessel and to determine the ability of such a vessel to contain a heavily damaged nuclear reactor core. These countries are Belgium, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The results of this examination, together with those from an earlier NEA programme which analysed samples of the TMI-2 reactor core, are a particularly valuable contribution to a better understanding of severe accidents because they are based on an actual accident in a commercial pressurised water reactor, rather than on experiments and calculations. These results should be available in 1992.

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