Chapter 8

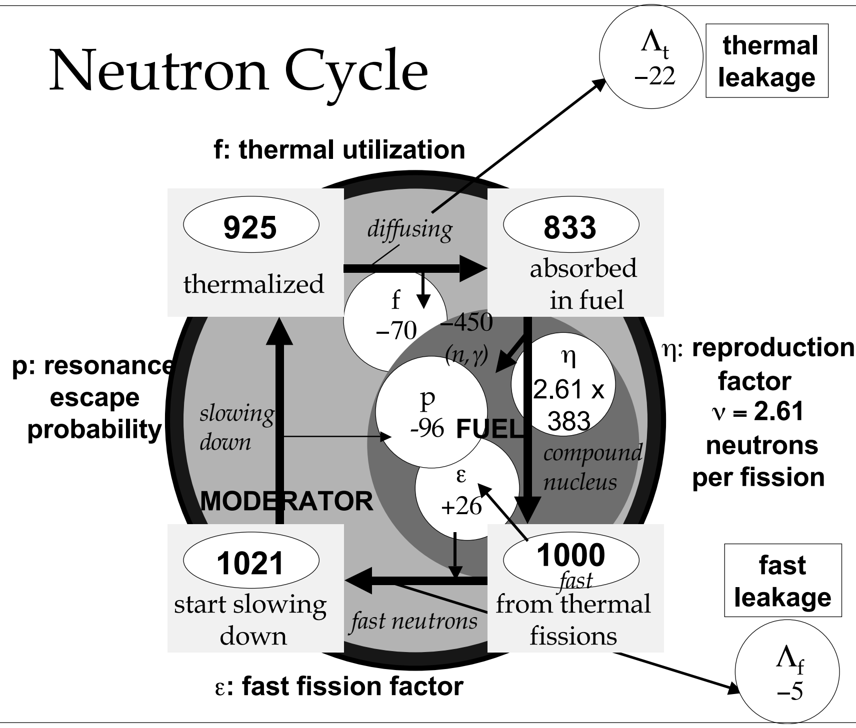
Power Changes in a Critical Reactor

- ***For very small reactivity increases***
- ***For small reactivity increases***
- ***For large reactivity increases/decreases***

The Critical Reactor

- **$k = \eta f p \varepsilon \Lambda_f \Lambda_t = 1$**
  - η is the reproduction factor, 1.20030
  - f is the thermal utilization, 0.92248
  - p is resonance escape probability, 0.90634
  - ε is the fast fission factor, 1.02597
  - Λ_f is the fast non-leakage probability, 0.9951
  - Λ_t is the thermal non-leakage probability, 0.9762
    - η,p & ε are design values for burnup 1.66 n/kb
    - $\Lambda_f \Lambda_t$ agree with design estimates of leakage
    - f is chosen to give k = 1

Neutron Cycle



Parasitic (Non-Fuel) Absorption

- 26 in zirconium (pressure tubes etc.)
- 22 in heavy water
- 3 in instruments and structures
- 16 in adjusters
- _3 in liquid zone control compartments

70 in Total (typical values)

By adjusting the water (H_2O) level in the zone compartments we can make k slightly bigger or smaller than 1.

Reactivity

- Notation: we use $\Delta k = k - 1$
- To measure how far the reactor is from critical ($k = 1$) we can use
  - Δk the absolute difference
  - $\Delta k/k$ the relative difference $= \rho$
- Our notes call Δk the reactivity
- Most textbooks call $\Delta k/k$ the reactivity
- When k is nearly = 1 there is no numerical difference.

Neutron Cycles for k > 1 Initial Power is P_0

- At time $t = 0$ add small $+ \Delta k$

1st generation $P_1 = k\,P_0$

2nd generation $P_2 = k\,P_1 = k^2 P_0$

3rd generation $P_3 = k\,P_2 = k^3 P_0$

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after n cycles $P_n = k^n P_0$

Neutron Lifetime and Reactor Period

- **$P_n = k^n P_0$** is a perfectly good formula
- But, it is useful to write the formula as an exponent in terms of:
  - time, t, rather than number of cycles, n.
    - t is time after Δk is added
  - *reactor period*, τ
    - a parameter to characterize rate of power increase
  - *neutron lifetime*, $\mathcal{L}$
    - average time of one cycle

$$\mathbf{P(t) = P_0\, e^{t/\tau}}$$

Playing Games with the Math

$P_n = k^n P_0$ can be written as

$P(t) = P_0\, e^{t/\tau}$

if $k^n = e^{t/\tau}$ or $n \supseteq ln(1 + \Delta k) = t/\tau$

$ln(1 + \Delta k) = \Delta k$ for very small Δk, and,

$t = n \times \mathcal{L}$ (by definition of $\mathcal{L}$) so

$$\boldsymbol{\tau = \mathcal{L}/\Delta k}$$

More Math

(This is how the text does it.)

- We get the same result if we set the average rate of change in neutron population over one cycle equal to the instantaneous rate of change
- $(n \times \Delta k)$ $\mathcal{L}$ is average rate of change
  - dn/dt is the instantaneous rate of change
- $(1/n)[dn/dt] = \Delta k/\mathcal{L} = 1/\tau$, so
- $\ln(n) = t/\tau + \ln(n_0)$
- $n(t) = n_0\, e^{t/\tau}$ or, $P(t) = P_0\, e^{t/\tau}$
- since power from fission is $\propto n$

Some Hidden Assumptions

- Control systems add positive reactivity in a sequence of small steps; a ramp, not a single large step.
  - In Ch 13 we will talk more about control.
- When temperatures change, η, f, p & Λ change. These changes are small at low power (below, say, 5% full power).
  - A reactivity change will not remain constant
  - Ch 12 explains how temperature affects reactivity

More Hidden Assumptions

- A change in fission rate changes the rates of production and burnout of fission products. Neutrons absorption changes so reactivity changes.
- Again, reactivity will not be constant
  - Chapter 11 is about major fission product effects.
- Reactor thermal power comes directly from fission, but also from fission product decay. Our formulas are for "neutron power"
  - Chapter 10 compares thermal power, neutron power and total fission power.

What is the Neutron Lifetime?

- Most neutrons take about 1 ms (10^{-3} s), from the moment of fission, to slow down, diffuse, be absorbed and cause a fission.
  - *Prompt Neutron Lifetime* ℓ ♠ 10^{-3} s (CANDU)
  - In a PWR ℓ is about 0.3 ms
- About ›% of the neutrons from fission come after β decay of the fission products.
  - Delayed neutrons arrive a few tenths of a second later, up to several minutes later.

Neutron Lifetime - First Guess

- Neglect the delayed neutrons and assume all neutrons are prompt.
- Example (fast power increase)
  - let k go from 1 to 1.0005 (Δk = 0.5 mk)
  - calculate power rise after 10 s
    - n = 10 000 cycles
  - $P(10s) = P_0 k^n = P_0 (1.0005)^{10\,000}$ ♠ 150 P_0
  - or, $t = \ell/\Delta k = 0.001/0.0005$ and $e^{10/2}$ ♠ 150
- This is much too fast to control
- A reactor will behave like this on a very large reactivity insertion (Chenobyl)

Neutron Lifetime - Second Guess

- Include the delayed neutrons to increase the average cycle time
- Approximate their effect assuming all the delayed neutrons have the same lifetime:
  - delayed neutron lifetime = 12.5 s
  - decay constant $\lambda = 0.08\ s^{-1}$ (= 1/12.5 s)
  - delayed neutron fraction is β ♠ 0.007 (fresh fuel)
- $\mathcal{L}$ = (0.993 x 0.001 s) + (0.007 x 12.5 s) ♠ 0.1 s
- $\mathcal{L} = (1-\beta) \times \ell + \beta \times (1/\lambda)$ i.e. $\boxed{\mathcal{L}}$ ♠ $\boxed{\beta/\lambda}$

Power Rise in the Average Lifetime Approximation

- with $\mathcal{L}$ ♠ β/λ the formula for reactor period becomes

$$\tau = \beta/(\lambda\Delta k)$$

- This is the *average lifetime approximation* because all neutrons are assumed the same, with a common average lifetime.

$$P = P_0\, e^{(\lambda\Delta k/\beta)\, t}$$

- This formula works well for small Δk additions typical of reactor control systems.

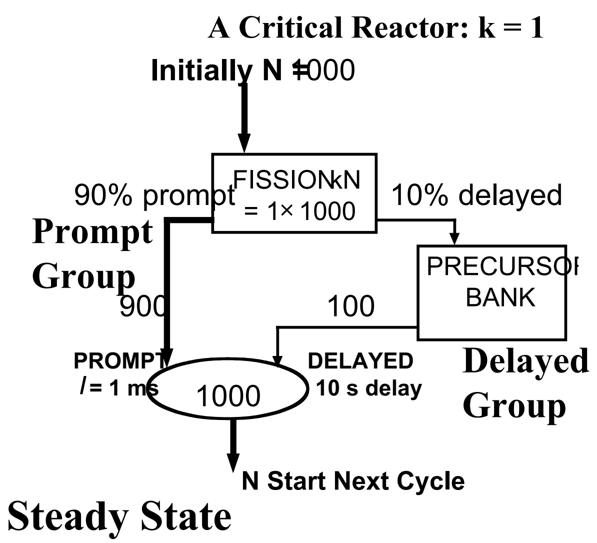
Example Repeated

- $\Delta k = 0.0005$ ms, $\lambda = 12.5$ s, $\beta = 0.007$ & $t = 10$ s:
  - $\tau = \beta/(\lambda\Delta k) = (0.007 \times 12.5/\ 0.0005) = 175$ s
  - $P(10\text{ s}) = P_0\, e^{10/175} = 1.06\, P_0$
- This is a 6% increase in 10 s for a 0.5 mk reactivity addition, not 15 000% as we saw assuming prompt neutrons alone.
- The rate of increase is less than 0.6% present power per second
- A control system can be designed for this.

What is Wrong with This?

- The delayed neutrons have such an important effect that we must consider their effect more carefully. It is not good enough to just average their lifetime with the prompt neutrons:
- separate the neutrons into two distinct groups, prompt and delayed neutrons, each with its own lifetime.
- This is the *Two Group Approximation*

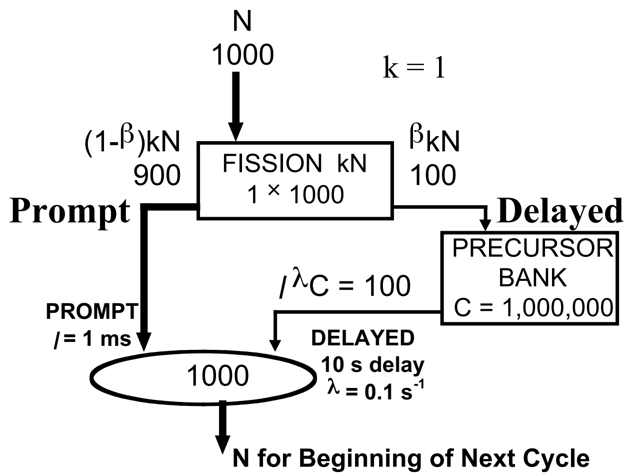
Next Guess - Two Groups; all delayed neutrons have the same lifetime



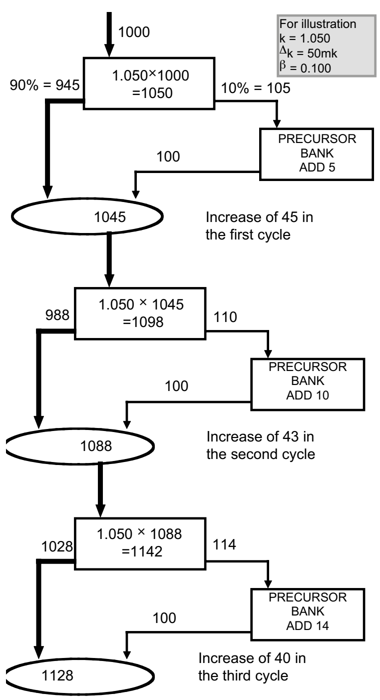
- To Illustrate we use an unrealistic large delayed neutron fraction of

  $\beta = 10\%$

A Steady State Critical Reactor



- Here is the same cycle with symbols and artificial numbers



- Here we see the effect through 3 complete cycles after neutron multiplication

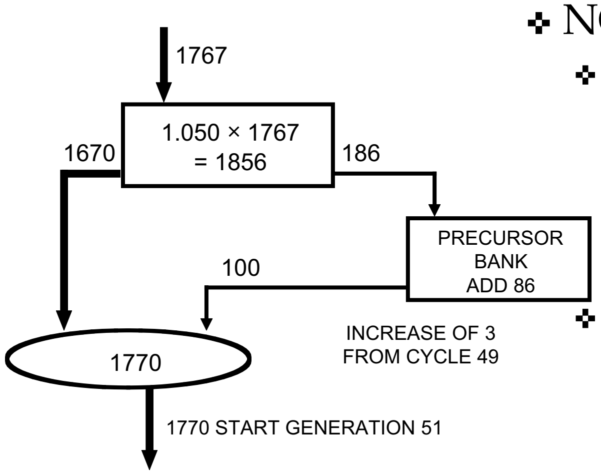
  k = 1 goes to k = 1.050

  $\Delta k = 50$ mk
- This is a completely artificial value for illustration.
  - It is only possible because β is also absurdly large.

What Happens to Each Group?

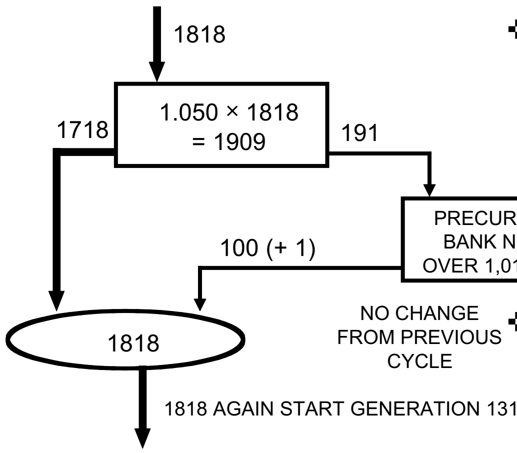
- Notice that the prompt population increases significantly in each cycle,
  - BUT
- The size of the increase is dropping.
- More go into the precursor bank in each cycle. Initiallythere is no increase in the number coming out.

Cycle # 50 (about 0.05 s later)



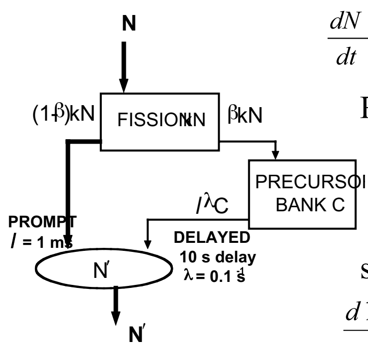
- NOTICE
  - not much increase from cycle 50 to cycle 51
  - large increase in precursor bank each cycle has almost saturated

Complete Saturation by Cycle 130



- **By now the bank is big enough that it should increase its output.**
- **This now drives power up at a rate controlled by the decay rate.**

Express a Typical Cycle in Symbols



$$\frac{dN}{dt} \approx \frac{(N' - N)}{\ell} = \frac{(1-\beta)kN}{\ell} - \frac{N}{\ell} + \lambda C$$

Rearranging

$$\left(\frac{1}{N}\right)\frac{dN}{dt} = k\left[\frac{\left(\frac{k-1}{k}\right) - \beta}{\ell}\right] + \frac{\lambda C}{N}$$

so

$$\frac{d\ln(N)}{dt} = \left(\frac{1}{N}\right)\frac{dN}{dt} = \left[\frac{\rho - \beta}{\ell}\right] + \frac{\lambda C}{N}$$

Also

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = \frac{\beta kN}{\ell} - \lambda C$$

Translate the Symbols into a pair of coupled Differential Equations

The Point Reactor Model

- These same equations can be derived by separating the time dependent Diffusion Equation using $\Phi(\vec{r}) \cdot \phi(t)$
  - a 3-D spatial equation for flux shape
  - an independent time equation
- Many Textbooks derive this

  POINT REACTOR MODEL
- Power changes at each point in the reactor, independent of flux shape.

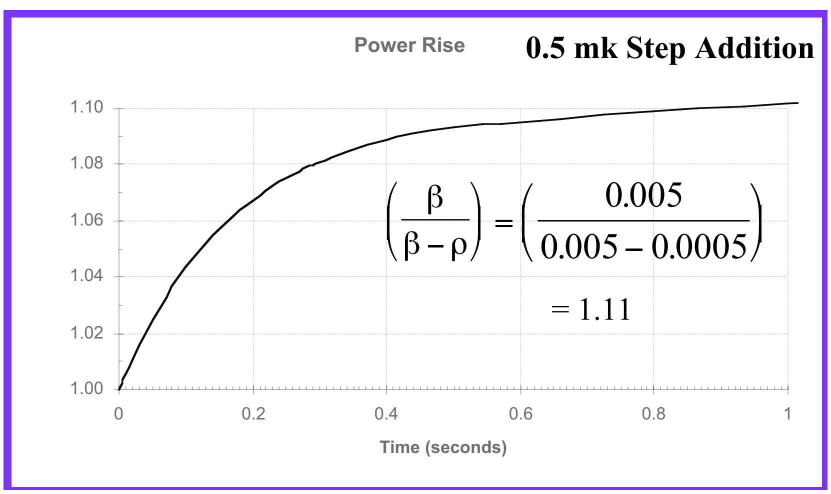
$$\frac{d\ln(N)}{dt} = \left(\frac{1}{N}\right)\frac{dN}{dt} = \left[\frac{\rho - \beta}{\ell}\right] + \frac{\lambda C}{N}$$

- Notice that there are two conditions for which Rate Log_e N is zero, or nearly zero.
  - Initial Steady State with $\rho = 0$ and $\beta/\ell = \lambda C_0/N_0$
    - i.e. $\lambda \ell C_0$ (decay) = βN_0 (production)
  - After N has grown from N_0 to $[\beta/(\beta-\rho)]N_0$ if C remains at its initial value C_0
- In both cases the two terms on the right hand side cancel each other out.

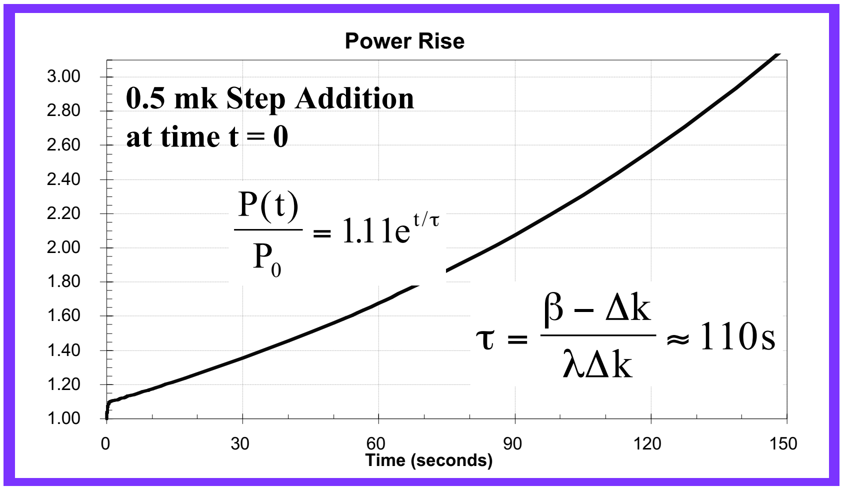
$$\frac{d\ln(N)}{dt} = \left(\frac{1}{N}\right)\frac{dN}{dt} = \left[\frac{\rho-\beta}{\ell}\right] + \frac{\lambda C}{N}$$

- After N reaches the value $\left(\frac{\beta}{\beta-\rho}\right)N_0$ the only way N can grow is for C to grow from its initial value C_0
- The Mathematical Solution of the Pair of Equations shows the following:
  - A prompt jump in power of $\left(\frac{\beta}{\beta-\rho}\right)N_0$
  - Followed by a stable exponential rise with a constant rate $\log_e$

Power after a Step Reactivity Increase
The Prompt Jump (fast transient)



Power after a Step Reactivity Increase
The "Stable" Power Increase



Mathematical Formula

$$P(t) = P_0 \frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k} e^{t/\tau} \times \left[1 - \left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta} \right) e^{-t/\tau_R} \right]$$

$$\tau = \frac{\beta - \rho}{\lambda \rho} \approx \frac{\beta - \Delta k}{\lambda \Delta k}$$

is the stable <u>Reactor Period</u>

$$\frac{1}{\tau_R} = \frac{\beta - \Delta k}{\ell} + \frac{1}{\tau}$$

τ_R determines the Transient Rise Time

How Good is this Analysis?

- Detailed computer codes are used for Safety Analysis. They include many groups of delayed neutrons, not just a single group. Accurate numerical solutions are possible.
- The two group equation illustrates features of the accurate solutions, and is quite good quantitatively.
  - The initial rise should be even faster,
  - the eventual long term growth a bit slower.

Dynamics of the Critical Reactor

Discussion of the Two Group Equation

Prompt Criticality

Power Rundown

$$P(t) = P_0 \frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k} e^{t/\tau} \times \left[1 - \left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta} \right) e^{-t/\tau_R} \right]$$

- First Simplification
  - The square bracket contributes a factor of 1.0 after the first second, so replace it

$$P(t) = P_0 \frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k} e^{t/\tau}$$

$$\tau = \frac{\beta - \Delta k}{\lambda \Delta k}$$

Simplification for Numerical Work

- It is convenient to rewrite the equation in terms of the ratio $\Delta k/\beta$.

$$P(t) = P_0 \frac{1}{1 - \left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta} \right)} e^{t/\tau} \qquad \tau = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta} \right)}{\lambda \left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta} \right)}$$

- The behaviour depends on the ratio $\Delta k/\beta$, not on the factors independently.

The Equation for Small Δk

$$P(t) = P_0 \frac{1}{1-\left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta}\right)} e^{t/\tau} \qquad \tau = \frac{1-\left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta}\right)}{\lambda\left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta}\right)}$$

- When $\Delta k << \beta$, the equation becomes:

$$P(t) = P_0 e^{t/\tau} \quad \text{with} \quad \tau = \frac{\beta}{\lambda \Delta k}$$

- This is exactly the result of analysis with the "Average Lifetime Approximation"
  - This supports the statement that the simple formula is good for small reactivity additions.

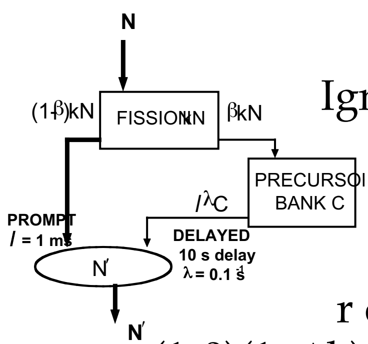
Normal Control

- CANDU power changes are regulated by the Liquid Zone Control System.
- Flow into 14 water (H_2O) compartments is adjusted by inlet valves in response to a power demand.
- Even if this system fails it cannot add more than about 0.1 mk per second max.
- The amount added in a ramp is typically less than 0.01 mk every fi s.

Normal Control (continued)

- Regulating system design assures that the operators never see a prompt jump.
- The time between step additions on a power ramp allows the prompt jump effect to settle before the next addition.
- Example: $\Delta k = 0.1$ mk, $\Delta k/\beta = 0.0001/0.005 = 0.02$
  - $\tau = (1\text{-}0.02)/(0.1 \times 0.02) = 490$ s Jump = $1/(1\text{-}0.02) = 1.02$
  - 5 minutes later, $P(300)/P_0 = 1.02\, e^{300/490} = 1.02 \times 1.84$
  - An immediate 2% rise, followed by a steady rise to 1.02 x 1.84 ♠ 1.9 times the initial power, e.g. from 10% F.P. to almost 20% F.P.

Return to Basics for a Simple Analysis



- Prompt Cycle Alone

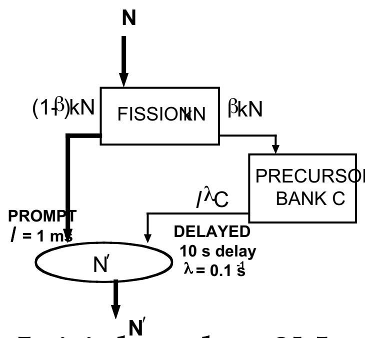
Ignoring Delayed Neutrons

- After n cycles
- $N_n = N_0\, [(1\text{-}\beta)k]^n$
- $N_n/N_0 = r^n$

r defined for convenience

- $r = (1\text{-}\beta)(1+\Delta k)$ ♠ $[1 - (\beta - \Delta k)]$
- For $\Delta k < \beta$, $r < 1$
- As n increases, r^n ∅ 0
- Typical Example: if $\Delta k < 1$ mk,
- $r^n < 0.01$ for $n > 5000$ (about 5 seconds)

Effect of Neutrons from the Precursor Bank



- In Steady State, each cycle $\beta k N_0$ neutrons go in and $\beta k N_0$ come out.
- Assume this continues unchanged for a few seconds after Δk added.

- Initial cycle βN_0 (initially k was 1)
- Second cycle $\beta N_0 + r\,\beta N_0$
- Third Cycle $\beta N_0 + r\,\beta N_0 + r^2\,\beta N_0$

After N cycles (r < 1, so β < Δk)

- nth Cycle $\beta N_0\,(1 + r + r^2 + \ldots + r^n)$
- $S_\forall \;= \beta N_0(1 + r + r^2 + \ldots + r^n + \ldots$
- $\underline{r\,S_\forall} = \beta N_0(\quad r + r^2 + \ldots + r^n + r^{n+1} + \ldots$

subtract $S_\forall(1-r) = \beta N_0$ so $S_\forall = \beta N_0\,/\,(1-r)$

- $S_n = S_\forall - r^n\,S_\forall$ so for large n $S_\forall = S_n$
  - and 1-r ♠ β−Δk
- $$P_n = \frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k} P_0$$

Discussion

- Notice again that there is a rapid *Prompt Jump*.
- The power does not continue to increase past this level unless the growth in the bank is accounted for.
- Adding prompt and delayed together:

$$P_n = r^n P_0 + \frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k} P_0 - \frac{r^n \beta}{\beta - \Delta k} P_0$$

$$= \frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k} P_0 - \frac{\Delta k}{\beta - \Delta k} r^n P_0$$

Comparison with 2 Group Equation

- "Simple" analysis showed

$$P_n = \left(\frac{\beta P_0}{\beta - \Delta k} \right) - \left(\frac{\Delta k P_0}{\beta - \Delta k} \right) r^n$$

- The two group equation can be written

$$P(t) = \left(\frac{\beta P_0}{\beta - \Delta k} \right) e^{t/\tau} - \left(\frac{\Delta k P_0}{\beta - \Delta k} \right) e^{-t\frac{(\beta - \Delta k)}{\ell}}$$

- The two group solution shows the effect of allowing for precursor bank growth.

What Happens if $\Delta k > \beta$?

- Now $r = (1 + \Delta k)(1 - \beta) > 1$
- The factor r^n, neglected before, now becomes dominant
- The analysis, neglecting the delayed neutrons, looks exactly like the initial simple analysis with all neutrons prompt.
- The condition $(1 + \Delta k)(1 - \beta) = 1$ is called

PROMPT CRITICAL

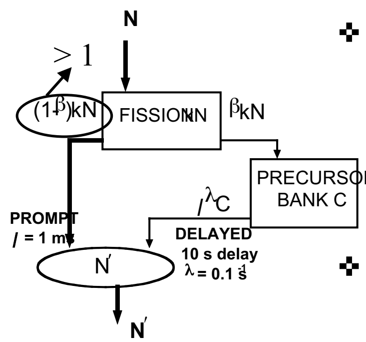
Prompt Critical

<u>The Condition for Prompt Criticality</u>

- $(1 + \Delta k)(1 - \beta) = 1$
- $\cancel{1} + \Delta k - \beta - \beta\Delta k = \cancel{1}$ so $\Delta k = \beta(1 + \Delta k)$
- $\beta = \Delta k/k = \rho$ or β ♠ Δk
- The reactor is critical even without the delayed neutrons and the power rises at a rate governed by the prompt neutron lifetime (ℓ = 1 ms) not d.n. decay (λ = 0.1s)

Why Prompt Critical Must be Avoided

- The prompt population increases out of control even before there is any contribution from delayed neutrons.



- Chernobyl: Initial estimates were + 30 mk added.
- Power rose from 7% to 10,000% in less than 2 seconds

Equation for Super Prompt Critical

- The two group equation breaks down for Δk ♠ β,
  - detailed analysis that includes more than one group of delayed neutrons gives numerical solutions.
- The equation gives reasonable results for Δk << β **and for** Δk >> β

$$P(t) = P_0\left(\frac{\beta}{\beta-\Delta k}\right)e^{t\left(\frac{\lambda\Delta k}{\beta-\Delta k}\right)} - P_0\left(\frac{\Delta k}{\beta-\Delta k}\right)e^{-t\frac{(\beta-\Delta k)}{\ell}}$$

Emergency Shutdown

- Normal regulation limits power increase to below about 0.8% present power/s
- When rate of power increase is measured to be 8% present power/s, the regulating system drops absorber rods, a "step back"
- When rate of power increase is measured to be 10% present power/s, Shutdown System #1 activates
- When rate of power increase is measured to be 15% present power/s, Shutdown System #2 activates

Response: Adding Negative Δk

- The dynamic response of the reactor when devices rapidly insert neutron absorbing material is also quite well modelled by the (simplified) two group equation.

$$P(t) = P_0\left(\frac{\beta}{\beta - \Delta k}\right)e^{\left(\frac{\lambda \Delta k}{\beta - \Delta k}\right)t}$$

- With negative Δk, the prompt jump becomes a prompt drop.

Example

- When SDS#1, Control Absorber Rods and the Liquid Zones all deploy together they insert nearly - 100 mk
- $\Delta k = -0.100$, β ♠ 0.005, $(\Delta k/\beta) = -20$
- $\beta/(\beta-\Delta k) = 1/[1 - (\Delta k/\beta)] = 1/21$ ♠ 0.05
- If initial power was 100% full power there is an immediate drop to 5% of full power.
- The capabilities of the various shutdown systems results in a prompt drop to the range of about 2% to 10%

Example Continued

- Following the prompt drop, power continues to fall, proportional to: $e^{\left(\frac{\lambda \Delta k}{\beta - \Delta k}\right)t}$
- Notice that for very large negative Δk, such as used for emergency shut down,

  $|\Delta k| >> \beta$, giving $e^{-\lambda t}$
- In the actual rundown, decay of delayed neutrons with different lifetimes results in λ changing gradually to a smaller number