

point when not in use. The security officers at each entrance station use the photograph on the badge to visually identify the individual requesting access. The badges for Southern Nuclear employees and contractor personnel who have been granted unescorted access are given to the individuals at the entrance location upon entry and are returned upon exit. In accordance with 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5), the badges are not allowed to be taken offsite.

The licensee proposes to implement an alternate unescorted access control system that would eliminate the need to issue and retrieve badges at the entry point and would allow all individuals with unescorted access to keep their badges when departing the site. An exemption from 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5) is required to permit contractors to take their badges offsite instead of returning them when exiting the site.

#### *Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action*

Because the proposed action involves administrative matters within the protected area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20, the Commission concludes that this proposed action would result in no significant radiological impacts. With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed action does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

#### *Alternative to the Proposed Action*

As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action. Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternative action are similar.

#### *Alternative Use of Resources*

This action does not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement related to operation of the Edwin I. Hatch Nuclear Plant, Unit 1 dated October 1972, and Unit 2 dated March 1978.

#### *Agencies and Persons Consulted*

In accordance with its stated policy, on August 22, 1997, the staff consulted with the Georgia State official, Mr. James Setser of the Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed

action. The State official had no comments.

#### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based upon the foregoing environmental assessment, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed exemption. Accordingly, the Commission has concluded that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

For further details with respect to this action, see the request for exemption dated July 2, 1997, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room located at the Burke County Public Library, 412 Fourth Street, Waynesboro, Georgia.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 15th day of September 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

**Herbert N. Berkow,**

*Director, Project Directorate II-2, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.*

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#### **NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

[Docket Nos. 50-338 AND 50-339]

#### **Virginia Electric and Power Company; North Anna Power Station, Units 1 and 2 Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact**

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption from the provisions of 10 CFR 70.24(a) to Virginia Electric and Power Company (the licensee) for North Anna Power Station, Units 1 and 2 (NPS1&2), located in Louisa County, Virginia.

#### **Environmental Assessment**

##### *Identification of Proposed Action*

The proposed action would exempt the licensee from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24(a), which require a monitoring system that will energize clear audible alarms if accidental criticality occurs in each area in which special nuclear material (SNM) is handled, used, or stored. The proposed action would also exempt the licensee from the requirements to maintain emergency procedures for each area in which this licensed SNM is handled, used, or stored to ensure that all personnel withdraw to an area of safety

upon sounding of the alarm, to familiarize personnel with the evacuation plan, and to designate responsible individuals for determining the cause of the alarm, and to place radiation survey instruments in accessible locations for use in such an emergency.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for exemption dated January 28, 1997, as supplemented March 24, 1997.

#### *The Need for the Proposed Action*

The purpose of 10 CFR 70.24(a) is to ensure that if a criticality were to occur during the handling, use, or storing of SNM, personnel would be alerted to that fact and would take appropriate action. At a commercial nuclear power plant, the inadvertent criticality with which 10 CFR 70.24 is concerned could occur during fuel handling operations. The SNM that could be assembled into a critical mass is in the form of nuclear fuel. The quantity of other forms of special nuclear materials that is stored onsite is small enough to preclude achieving critical mass. Since the fuel is not enriched beyond 4.3 weight percent Uranium-235 and commercial nuclear power plant licensees have procedures and features that are designed to prevent inadvertent criticality, the staff has determined that inadvertent criticality is not likely to occur during the handling of the special nuclear material. The requirements of 10 CFR 70.24(a), therefore, are not necessary to ensure the safety of personnel during the handling of special nuclear materials at commercial power plants.

#### *Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action*

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that there is no significant environmental impact if the exemption is granted. Inadvertent or accidental criticality will be precluded through the design of the fuel racks providing geometric spacing of fuel assemblies in their storage locations, compliance with the NPS Technical Specifications (TS), and administrative controls imposed on fuel handling procedures.

Appendix A of 10 CFR Part 50, "General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants," Criterion 62, requires that criticality in the fuel storage and handling system shall be prevented by physical systems or processes, preferably by use of geometrically safe configurations. This is met at NPS1&2, as identified in section 5.6 of the TS. Section 5.6.1.1 of the TS states the geometrically safe configurations for

new fuel stored in the new fuel pit storage racks or spent fuel storage racks.

The new fuel storage area at North Anna is used to receive and store new fuel in a dry condition upon arrival onsite and prior to loading into the reactor. The new fuel is stored vertically in an array with a distance of 21 inches between assemblies to assure  $K_{eff}$  is less than or equal to 0.98 with fuel of the highest anticipated enrichment in place assuming optimum moderation, e.g., an aqueous foam envelopment as a result of local fire fighting operations. Both irradiated and unirradiated fuel are moved to and from the reactor vessel and the spent fuel pool to accommodate refueling operations, as well as within the reactor vessel and spent fuel pool. Unirradiated fuel is also moved into the Fuel Building for storage and to and from the new fuel storage area. In every case, fuel movement is procedurally controlled and designed to preclude criticality concerns. In addition, the TS specifically address refueling operations and impose restrictions on fuel movement to preclude an accidental criticality, as well as limit the movement of certain loads over the spent fuel in the reactor vessel and the spent fuel pool.

The proposed exemption would not result in any significant radiological impacts. The proposed exemption would not affect radiological effluents nor cause any significant occupational exposures since the TS, design controls, including geometric spacing of fuel assembly storage spaces, and administrative controls preclude inadvertent criticality. The amount of radioactive waste would not be changed by the proposed exemption.

The proposed exemption does not result in any significant nonradiological environmental impacts. The proposed exemption involves features located entirely within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

#### *Alternatives to the Proposed Action*

Since the Commission has concluded that there is no measurable environmental impact associated with the proposed action, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact need not be evaluated. As an alternative to the proposed exemption, the staff has considered denial of the requested exemption. Denial of the request would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The

environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternative action are similar.

#### *Alternative Use of Resources*

This action does not involve the use of resources not previously considered in connection with the Final Environmental Statement related to the operation of North Anna Power Station, Units 1 and 2, issued by the Commission in April 1973.

#### *Agencies and Persons Consulted*

In accordance with its stated policy, the NRC staff consulted with Mr. Foldesi of the Virginia Department of Health on July 14, 1997, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. Mr. Foldesi had no comments on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

#### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based upon the environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed exemption.

For further details with respect to this action, see the request for exemption dated January 28, 1997, as supplemented March 3, 1997, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20555 and at the local public document room located at the Alderman Library, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903-2498.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland this 16th day of September, 1997.

For The Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

**Gordon E. Edison,**

*Acting Director, Project Directorate II-1,  
Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of  
Nuclear Reactor Regulation.*

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## **NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

### **Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards Subcommittee Meeting on Reactor Fuels, Onsite Fuel Storage, and Decommissioning; Notice of Meeting**

The ACRS Subcommittee on Reactor Fuels, Onsite Fuel Storage, and Decommissioning will hold a meeting on October 9, 1997, Room T-2B3, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland.

The entire meeting will be open to public attendance.

The agenda for the subject meeting shall be as follows:

*Thursday, October 9, 1997—8:30 a.m.  
until the conclusion of business.*

The Subcommittee will discuss the basis of the NRC proposed fuel failure criterion for high burnup conditions, and the behavior and adequacy of NRC fuel codes under accident conditions. The Electric Power Research Institute representatives will present their views on this matter. The purpose of this meeting is to gather information, analyze relevant issues and facts, and to formulate proposed positions and actions, as appropriate, for deliberation by the full Committee.

Oral statements may be presented by members of the public with the concurrence of the Subcommittee Chairman; written statements will be accepted and made available to the Committee. Electronic recordings will be permitted only during those portions of the meeting that are open to the public, and questions may be asked only by members of the Subcommittee, its consultants, and staff. Persons desiring to make oral statements should notify the cognizant ACRS staff engineer named below five days prior to the meeting, if possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

During the initial portion of the meeting, the Subcommittee, along with any of its consultants who may be present, may exchange preliminary views regarding matters to be considered during the balance of the meeting.

The Subcommittee will then hear presentations by and hold discussions with representatives of the Electric Power Research Institute, Nuclear Energy Institute, the NRC staff, their consultants, and other interested persons regarding this review.

Further information regarding topics to be discussed, whether the meeting has been cancelled or rescheduled, the Chairman's ruling on requests for the opportunity to present oral statements and the time allotted therefor can be obtained by contacting the cognizant ACRS staff engineer, Dr. Medhat El-Zeftawy (telephone 301/415-6889) between 7:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. (EDT). Persons planning to attend this meeting are urged to contact the above named individual one or two working days prior to the meeting to be advised of any potential changes in the proposed agenda, etc., that may have occurred.