

Commission, the presiding officer or the presiding Atomic Safety and Licensing Board that the petition and/or request should be granted based upon a balancing of the factors specified in 10 CFR 2.714(a)(1)(i)-(v) and 2.714(d).

For further details with respect to this action, see the application for amendment dated December 5, 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 Coastal Region Library, 8619 W. Crystal Street, Crystal River, Florida.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 9th day of January 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

L. Raghavan,

Senior Project Manager, Project Directorate II-3, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 98-1046 Filed 1-14-98; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-271]

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation; Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption from certain requirements of its regulations for Facility Operating License No. DPR-28, issued to Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation (the licensee), for operation of Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station located in Windham County, Vermont.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed action would exempt the licensee from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24, which requires in each area in which special nuclear material is handled, used, or stored a monitoring system that will energize clear audible alarms if accidental criticality occurs. The proposed action would also exempt the licensee from the requirements to maintain emergency procedures for each area in which this licensed special nuclear material is handled, used, or stored to ensure that all personnel withdraw to an area of safety upon the 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 December 16, 1997.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of 10 CFR 70.24 is to ensure that if a criticality were to occur during the handling of special nuclear material, 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 special nuclear material that could be assembled into a critical mass at a commercial nuclear power plant is in the form of nuclear fuel; the quantity of other forms of special nuclear material that is stored on site in any given location is small enough to preclude achieving a critical mass. Because the fuel is not enriched beyond 5.0 weight percent Uranium-235 and because commercial nuclear plant licensees have procedures and design features that prevent inadvertent criticality, the staff has determined that it is unlikely that an inadvertent criticality could occur due to the handling of special nuclear material at a commercial power reactor. The requirements of 10 CFR 70.24, therefore, are not necessary to ensure the safety of personnel during the handling of special nuclear material at commercial power reactors.

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 compliance with the Vermont Yankee Technical Specifications, the design of the fuel storage racks providing geometric spacing of fuel assemblies in their storage locations, and administrative controls imposed on fuel handling procedures. Technical Specifications requirements specify reactivity limits for the fuel storage racks and minimum spacing between the fuel assemblies in the storage racks.

Appendix A of 10 CFR part 50, "General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants," Criterion 62, requires the 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 the Vermont Yankee Station, as identified in the Technical Specifications and the

Updated Final Safety Analysis Report (UFSAR).

The change will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluents that may be released offsite, and there is no significant increase in the allowable individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed action does involve 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 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 for the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on January 9, 1998, the staff consulted with the Vermont State official, Mr. William K. Sherman, of the Department of Public Service, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

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 action.

For further details with respect to the proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated December 16, 1997, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, which is located at The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room located at the Brooks Memorial Library, 224 Main Street, Brattleboro, VT.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 9th day of January 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Ronald B. Eaton,

Acting Director, Project Directorate I-3, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Regulatory Guides; Withdrawal

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is withdrawing several guides in its Regulatory Guide Series. Regulatory guides may be withdrawn when (1) they are superseded by the Commission's regulations, (2) equivalent recommendations have been incorporated in approved codes or standards, or (3) there have been changes in methods, techniques, or the need for specific guidance. Since the methods discussed in these regulatory guides fall into one of these categories, the regulatory guides listed below are being withdrawn. New applications for licenses or amendments should address current guidance. However, withdrawal of these regulatory guides does not alter any existing license conditions that were based on these guides. Applications that reference these regulatory guides and are pending as of the date of this notice do not need to be withdrawn or amended.

Regulatory Guide 3.2, Efficiency Testing of Air-Cleaning Systems Containing Devices for Removal of Particles (January 1973)

Regulatory Guide 3.9, Concrete Radiation Shields (June 1973)

Regulatory Guide 3.33, Assumptions Used for Evaluating the Potential Radiological Consequences of Accidental Nuclear Criticality in a Fuel Reprocessing Plant (April 1977)

Regulatory Guide 3.34, Assumptions Used for Evaluating the Potential Radiological Consequences of Accidental Nuclear Criticality in a Uranium Fuel Fabrication Plant (Revision 1, July 1979)

Regulatory Guide 3.35, Assumptions Used for Evaluating the Potential Radiological Consequences of Accidental Nuclear Criticality in a Plutonium Processing and Fuel Fabrication Plant (Revision 1, July 1979)

Regulatory Guide 5.1, Serial Numbering of Fuel Assemblies for Light-Water-Cooled Nuclear Power Reactors (December 1972)

Regulatory Guide 5.14, Use of Observation (Visual Surveillance) Techniques in Material Access Areas (Revision 1, May 1980)

Regulatory Guide 5.24, Analysis and Use of Process Data for the Protection of Special Nuclear Material (June 1974)

Regulatory Guide 5.29, Nuclear Material Control Systems for Nuclear Power Plants (Revision 1, June 1975)

Regulatory Guide 5.30, Materials Protection Contingency Measures for Uranium and Plutonium Fuel Manufacturing Plants (June 1974)

Regulatory Guide 5.45, Standard Format and Content for the Special Nuclear Material Control and Accounting Section of a Special Nuclear Material License Application (Including That for a Uranium Enrichment Facility) (December 1974)

Regulatory Guide 8.3, Film Badge Performance Criteria (February 1973)

In addition, Draft Regulatory Guide DG-0008, "Applications for the Use of Sealed Sources in Portable Gauging Devices" (May 1995), is being withdrawn from consideration as a regulatory guide. The NRC recently published NUREG-1556, "Consolidated Guidance About Materials Licenses: Program-Specific Guidance About Portable Gauge Licenses," which contains information on the same subject.

Comments and suggestions in connection with items for inclusion in guides currently being developed or improvements in all published guides are encouraged at any time. Written comments may be submitted to the Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555.

(5 U.S.C. 552(a))

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 22nd day of December 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Malcolm R. Knapp,

Acting Director, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research.

[FR Doc. 98-1047 Filed 1-15-98; 8:45 am]

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PENSION BENEFIT GUARANTY CORPORATION

Interest Assumption for Determining Variable-Rate Premium; Interest on Late Premium Payments; Interest on Underpayments and Overpayments of Single-Employer Plan Termination Liability and Multiemployer Withdrawal Liability; Interest Assumptions for Multiemployer Plan Valuations Following Mass Withdrawal

AGENCY: Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

ACTION: Notice of interest rates and assumptions.

SUMMARY: This notice informs the public to be used under certain Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation regulations. These rates and assumptions are published elsewhere (or are derivable from rates published elsewhere), but are collected and published in this notice for the convenience of the public. Interest rates are also published on the PBGC's home page (<http://www.pbgc.gov>).

DATES: The interest rate for determining the variable-rate premium under part 4006 applies to premium payment years beginning in January 1998. The interest assumptions for performing multiemployer plan valuations following mass withdrawal under part 4281 apply to valuation dates occurring in February 1998. The interest rates for late premium payments under part 4007 and for underpayments and overpayments of single-employer plan termination liability under part 4062 and multiemployer withdrawal liability under part 4219 apply to interest accruing during the first quarter (January through March) of 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Harold J. Ashner, Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 1200 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20005, 202-326-4024. (For TTY/TDD users, call the Federal relay service toll-free at 1-800-877-8339 and ask to be connected to 202-326-4024.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Variable-Rate Premiums

Section 4006(a)(3)(E)(iii)(II) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and § 4006.4(b)(1) of the PBGC's regulation on Premium Rates (29 CFR part 4006) prescribe use of an assumed interest rate in determining a single-employer plan's variable-rate premium. The rate is the "applicable percentage" (described in the statute and the regulation) of the annual yield on 30-year Treasury securities for the month preceding the