

Road, Wilmington, North Carolina 28403-3297.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 17th day of June 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

**David C. Trimble,**

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

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## NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50-327 and 50-328]

### Tennessee Valley Authority (Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2); Confirmatory Order Modifying License Effective Immediately

#### I

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA, or the Licensee) is the holder of Facility Operating License Nos. DPR-77 and DPR-79, which authorizes operation of Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2 located in Hamilton County, Tennessee.

#### II

The staff of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has been concerned that Thermo-Lag 330-1 fire barrier systems installed by licensees may not provide the level of fire endurance intended and that licensees that use Thermo-Lag 330-1 fire barriers may not be meeting regulatory requirements. During the 1992 to 1994 timeframe, the NRC staff issued Generic Letter (GL) 92-08, "Thermo-Lag 330-1 Fire Barriers" and subsequent requests for additional information that requested licensees to submit plans and schedules for resolving the Thermo-Lag issue. The NRC staff has obtained and reviewed all licensees' corrective plans and schedules. The staff is concerned that some licensees may not be making adequate progress toward resolving the plant-specific issues, and that some implementation schedules may be either too tenuous or too protracted. For example, several licensees informed the NRC staff that their completion dates had slipped by 6 months to as much as 3 years. For plants that have completion action scheduled beyond 1997, including Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2, the NRC staff has met with the licensees to discuss the progress of the licensees' corrective actions and the extent of licensee management attention regarding completion of Thermo-Lag corrective actions. In addition, the NRC staff discussed with licensees the possibility

of accelerating their completion schedules.

TVA was one of the licensees with which the NRC staff held meetings. At the May 30, 1997, meeting, the NRC staff reviewed with TVA the schedule of Thermo-Lag corrective actions for the Sequoyah units described in the handout presented to the NRC during that meeting. Based on the information provided during the meeting, as well as a subsequent letter dated June 25, 1997, the NRC staff has concluded that the schedules presented by TVA are reasonable. This conclusion is based on (1) the amount of installed Thermo-Lag, (2) the complexity of the plant-specific fire barrier configurations and issues, (3) the need to perform certain plant modifications during outages as opposed to those that can be performed while the plant is at power, and (4) integration with other significant, but unrelated issues that TVA is addressing at its plant. In order to remove compensatory measures such as fire watches, it has been determined that resolution of the Thermo-Lag corrective actions by TVA must be completed in accordance with current schedules. By letter dated April 29, 1998, the NRC staff notified TVA of its plan to incorporate TVA's schedule commitment into a requirement by issuance of an order and requested consent from the Licensee. By letter dated May 13, 1998, TVA provided its consent to issuance of a Confirmatory Order.

#### III

The Licensee's commitment as set forth in its letter of May 13, 1998, is acceptable and is necessary for the NRC to conclude that public health and safety are reasonably assured.

To preclude any schedule slippage and to assure public health and safety, the NRC staff has determined that the Licensee's commitment in its May 13, 1998, letter be confirmed by this Order. The Licensee has agreed to this action. Based on the above, and the Licensee's consent, this Order is immediately effective upon issuance.

#### IV

Accordingly, pursuant to sections 103, 161b, 161i, 161o, 182, and 186 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, and the Commission's regulations in 10 CFR 2.202 and 10 CFR Part 50, It Is Hereby Ordered, effective immediately, that:

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) shall complete final implementation of Thermo-Lag 330-1 fire barrier corrective actions at the Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2 as described in the TVA submittal

dated June 25, 1997. Walkdowns, evaluations, and upgrades will be completed by June 30, 1999.

The Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, may relax or rescind, in writing, any provisions of this Confirmatory Order upon a showing by the Licensee of good cause.

#### V

Any person adversely affected by this Confirmatory Order, other than the Licensee, may request a hearing within 20 days of its issuance. Where good cause is shown, consideration will be given to extending the time to request a hearing. A request for extension of time must be made in writing to the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555, and include a statement of good cause for the extension. Any request for a hearing shall be submitted to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Attention: Rulemaking and Adjudications Staff, Washington, D.C. 20555. Copies of the hearing request shall also be sent to the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555, to the Deputy Assistant General Counsel for Enforcement at the same address, to the Regional Administrator, NRC Region II at the Atlanta Federal Center, 23 T85, 61 Forsyth Street, SW., Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3415, and to the Licensee. If such a person requests a hearing, that person shall set forth with particularity the manner in which his/her interest is adversely affected by this Order and shall address criteria set forth in 10 CFR 2.714(d).

If a hearing is requested by a person whose interest is adversely affected, the Commission will issue an Order designating the time and place of any such hearing. If a hearing is held, the issue to be considered at such hearing shall be whether this Confirmatory Order should be sustained.

In the absence of any request for hearing, or written approval of an extension of time in which to request a hearing, the provisions specified in Section IV above shall be final 20 days from the date of this Order without further order or proceedings. If an extension of time for requesting a hearing has been approved, the provisions specified in Section IV shall be final when the extension expires if a hearing request has not been received. An answer or a request for hearing shall not stay the immediate effectiveness of this Order.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland this 18th day of June 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.  
**Samuel J. Collins,**  
*Director Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.*  
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## NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425]

### **Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., et al.; Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact**

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of amendments to Facility Operating License Nos. NPF-68 and NPF-81 issued to Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., et al. (the licensee), for operation of the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP), Units 1 and 2, respectively, located in Burke County, Georgia.

#### **Environmental Assessment**

##### *Identification of the Proposed Action*

The proposed action would change the common VEGP Technical Specifications to allow an increase in the Unit 1 spent fuel storage capacity from 288 to 1476 fuel assemblies. The increase in spent fuel storage capacity is achieved by replacing the existing spent fuel storage racks, a process referred to herein as "reracking." The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for license amendments dated September 4, 1997, as supplemented by letters dated November 20, 1997, May 19 and June 12, 1998.

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

The VEGP spent fuel pools (SFPs) are operated as a single facility and accept spent fuel from both Units 1 and 2. The VEGP Unit 2 spent fuel pool has a storage capacity of 2098 fuel assemblies. Under current conditions, the SFPs will lose the capacity for a full-core off-load (193 fuel assemblies) in the year 2005. There are no independent commercial spent fuel storage facilities operating in the U.S., nor are there any domestic reprocessing facilities; therefore, the projected loss of storage capacity in the VEGP SFPs would affect the licensee's ability to operate VEGP. The proposed amendments are needed to ensure the capability of full-core off-load until the year 2015.

### *Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action*

#### **Radiological Impacts**

VEGP has waste treatment systems designed to collect and process waste that may contain radioactive material. The radioactive waste treatment systems were evaluated in the "Final Environmental Statement Related to the Operation of Vogtle Electric Generating Plant," NUREG-1087, March 1985. The SFP cooling and purification system is designed to remove the decay heat generated by stored spent fuel assemblies and to clarify and purify the water to permit unencumbered access to the plant fuel storage area and maintain optical clarity of the SFP water.

#### **Liquid Radioactive Waste**

It is not expected that there will be a significant increase in the liquid release of radionuclides from the plant as a result of the SFP reracking modifications. The SFP cooling and purification system operates as a closed system. The SFP demineralizer resin removes soluble radioactive materials from the SFP water. A small increase in activity on the filters and demineralizers may occur during the installation of the new racks because of the more frequent fuel shuffling and underwater pressure washing of the old racks during removal. However, the amount of radioactivity released to the environment as a result of the proposed reracking is expected to be negligible.

#### **Solid Radioactive Waste**

The existing spent fuel racks in the VEGP Unit 1 SFP will be removed from the site by a salvage company. After usable material has been salvaged, the remainder will be volume reduced and disposed of at the Barnwell, South Carolina, facility. In a worst-case scenario, with no salvageable material and no volume reduction, the resulting material would represent 44 percent of the expected solid waste volume associated with VEGP Units 1 and 2 for 1998; however, this volume is not significant when viewed over the 40-year operational lifetime of the VEGP facility.

In addition to the spent fuel assemblies themselves, the only other solid radioactive waste generated by the SFP is the SFP polisher resin, which is used for water clarity. As indicated in the licensee's submittal of September 4, 1997, these resins are replaced approximately once per refueling cycle. No additional spent resins are expected to be generated by the pool cleanup system as a result of the expanded spent fuel storage capability; therefore, no

significant increase in the volume of solid radioactive waste associated with these resins is expected with the proposed amendments.

#### **Radioactive Material Released to the Atmosphere**

The only radioactive gas of significance that could be attributable to storing additional spent fuel assemblies for a longer period of time, made possible as a result of the proposed reracking, would be the noble gas radionuclide krypton-85 (Kr-85). Experience has demonstrated that after spent fuel has decayed 4 to 6 months, there is no longer a significant release of fission products, including Kr-85, from stored spent fuel containing cladding defects. The licensee has stated that in the past 2 years, the Kr-85 concentrations measured from the fuel storage area ventilation release point have been negligible and the licensee expects that enlarging the storage capacity of the SFP will have no effect on the average annual quantities of Kr-85 released to the atmosphere.

Iodine-131 released from spent fuel assemblies to the SFP water will not be significantly increased as a result of the expansion of the fuel storage capacity since the iodine-131 inventory in the fuel will decay to negligible levels between refuelings.

Most of the tritium in the SFP water results from activation of boron and lithium in the primary coolant during power operation. A relatively small amount of tritium is produced during reactor operation by the fission process within the reactor fuel. The subsequent diffusion of the tritium through the fuel and cladding represents a small contribution to the total amount of tritium in the SFP water. Tritium releases from the fuel assemblies occur mainly during reactor operation and, to a limited extent, shortly after shutdown. Thus, expanding the SFP capacity will not increase the tritium concentration in the SFP.

Most airborne releases of tritium and iodine from nuclear power plants result during refuelings from evaporation of reactor coolant, which contains tritium and iodine in higher concentrations than in the SFP. The storage of additional spent fuel assemblies in the SFP is not expected to significantly increase the SFP bulk water temperature, and, therefore, evaporation rates from the SFP are not expected to significantly increase. Consequently, it is not expected that there will be any significant change in the annual release of tritium or iodine as a result of the proposed modifications from that previously evaluated in NUREG-1087.