



Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc.
Vermont Yankee
320 Governor Hunt Rd.
Vernon, VT 05354
802-257-7711

Coley C. Chappell
Licensing Manager

BVY 13-093

10 CFR 73.5
10 CFR 73.55

October 31, 2013

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Attn: Document Control Desk
Washington, DC 20555-0001

SUBJECT: Request for Exemption from Specific Provisions in 10 CFR 73.55
Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station
Docket No. 50-271
License No. DPR-28

REFERENCES:

1. Letter, Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. to USNRC, "Notification of Permanent Cessation of Power Operations," BVY 13-079, dated September 23, 2013
2. Letter, Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. to USNRC "Vermont Yankee - Request for Approval of Certified Fuel Handler Training Program," dated October 31, 2013

Dear Sir or Madam:

In accordance with 10 CFR 73.5, "Specific Exemptions," Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (ENO) requests an exemption from 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii), related to the suspension of security measures in an emergency or during severe weather for Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (VY). 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) require that the suspension of security measures be approved by a licensed senior operator, before taking this action. ENO is requesting an exemption from these rules to allow either a licensed senior operator or a certified fuel handler to approve the suspension of security measures. Approval of this exemption request will align 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) with 10 CFR 50.54(y) for VY.

On September 23, 2013, ENO informed the NRC that VY will permanently cease operation at the end of the current operating cycle (Reference 1). Once VY permanently ceases operation and submits the certifications required by 10 CR 50.82(a)(1), pursuant to 10 CFR 50.82(a)(2), the 10 CFR Part 50 license for VY will no longer authorize operation of the reactor or emplacement or retention of fuel in the reactor vessel. Reference 2 was submitted proposing a Certified Fuel Handler training program for NRC approval.

ENO requests review and approval of this exemption request by November 1, 2014. ENO requests that the approved exemption become effective following NRC approval of a VY Certified Fuel Handler training program (Reference 2) and submittal of the certifications required by 10 CFR 50.82(a)(1).

This letter contains no new regulatory commitments.

Should you have any questions concerning this letter or require additional information, please contact me at 802-451-3374.

Sincerely,


CCC/plc

Attachment: 1. Request for Exemption from Specific Provisions in 10 CFR 73.55

cc: Mr. William M. Dean
Regional Administrator, Region 1
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
2100 Renaissance Blvd, Suite 100
King of Prussia, PA 19406-2713

Mr. Douglas V. Pickett, Project Manager
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Mail Stop O8C2A
Washington, DC 20555

USNRC Resident Inspector
Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee, LLC
320 Governor Hunt Road
Vernon, Vermont 05354

Mr. Christopher Recchia, Commissioner
Vermont Department of Public Service
112 State Street – Drawer 20
Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2601

Attachment 1

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station

Request for Exemption from Specific Provisions in 10 CFR 73.55

**REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION FROM SPECIFIC PROVISIONS IN 10 CFR 73.55
VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION
ENTERGY NUCLEAR OPERATIONS, INC
DOCKET NO. 50-271**

I. PROPOSED EXEMPTION

In accordance with 10 CFR 73.5, "Specific Exemptions," Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (ENO) is requesting an exemption from 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) for Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (VY), related to the suspension of security measures in an emergency or during severe weather. These rules require that the suspension of security measures be approved by a licensed senior operator, before taking the action. Consistent with 10 CFR 50.54(y), the proposed exemption would allow either a licensed senior operator or a certified fuel handler to approve the suspension of security measures in an emergency or during severe weather at VY after the certifications required under § 50.82(a)(1) have been docketed.

II. BACKGROUND

On September 23, 2013, ENO informed the NRC that it intended to permanently cease operation of VY at the end of the current operating cycle (Reference 1). Once the certifications required by 10 CFR 50.82(a)(1) have been submitted to the NRC, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.82(a)(2), the 10 CFR Part 50 license for VY will no longer authorize operation of the reactor or emplacement or retention of fuel in the reactor vessel.

III. BASIS FOR EXEMPTION

Approval of this exemption request will align 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) with 10 CFR 50.54(y) and 10 CFR 50.2 for VY as a nuclear power reactor facility for which the certifications required under § 50.82(a)(1) will have been docketed. 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) starts by stating, "In accordance with §§ 50.54(x) and 50.54(y) of this chapter," and concludes by stating, "The suspension of security measures must be approved as a minimum by a licensed senior operator before taking this action." 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) concludes by stating, "The suspension of security measures must be approved, as a minimum, by a licensed senior operator, with input from the security supervisor or manager, before taking this action."

10 CFR 50.54(x) states:

"A licensee may take reasonable action that departs from a license condition or a technical specification (contained in a license issued under this part) in an emergency when this action is immediately needed to protect the public health and safety and no action consistent with license conditions and technical specifications that can provide adequate or equivalent protection is immediately apparent."

10 CFR 50.54(y) states:

"Licensee action permitted by paragraph (x) of this section shall be approved, as a minimum, by a licensed senior operator, or, at a nuclear power reactor facility for which the certifications

required under § 50.82(a)(1) have been submitted, by either a licensed senior operator or a certified fuel handler, prior to taking the action."

10 CFR 73.55(p) states:

"(1) The licensee may suspend implementation of affected requirements of this section under the following conditions:

(i) In accordance with §§50.54(x) and 50.54(y) of this chapter, the licensee may suspend any security measures under this section in an emergency when this action is immediately needed to protect the public health and safety and no action consistent with license conditions and technical specifications that can provide adequate or equivalent protection is immediately apparent. This suspension of security measures must be approved as a minimum by a licensed senior operator before taking this action.

(ii) During severe weather when the suspension of affected security measures is immediately needed to protect the personal health and safety of security force personnel and no other immediately apparent action consistent with the license conditions and technical specifications can provide adequate or equivalent protection. This suspension of security measures must be approved, as a minimum, by a licensed senior operator, with input from the security supervisor or manager, before taking this action."

10 CFR 50.2 provides the following definition:

"*Certified fuel handler* means, for a nuclear power reactor facility, a non-licensed operator who has qualified in accordance with a fuel handler training program approved by the Commission."

The permissibility and equivalency of decision making by a certified fuel handler is reflected in 10 CFR 50.54(y), which was promulgated as part of a rulemaking to clarify and codify practices that have been accepted for licensees of a unit being decommissioned. In proposing this provision, the Commission explained, "A nuclear power reactor that has permanently ceased operations and no longer has fuel in the reactor vessel does not require a licensed individual to monitor core conditions. A certified fuel handler at a permanently shutdown and defueled nuclear power reactor undergoing decommissioning is an individual who has the requisite knowledge and experience to evaluate plant conditions and make these judgments" (Reference 2). Therefore, application of 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) to require licensed senior operator approval for a facility that is permanently shutdown and defueled is not necessary to achieve their underlying purpose of the rules [10 CFR 50.12(a)(2)(ii)].

A. Justification for Exemption

The specific conditions for granting an exemption from regulations in 10 CFR 73 are set forth in 10 CFR 73.5. In accordance with 10 CFR 73.5, the NRC is authorized to grant an exemption from the requirements of the regulations in 10 CFR 73 as it determines are: (i) authorized by law, (ii) will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security, and (iii) is otherwise in the public interest. The following addresses each of these conditions and demonstrates that the NRC may grant the exemption request.

The Exemption Request is Authorized by Law

The NRC's authority to grant an exemption from its regulations in 10 CFR 73 is established by law as discussed in 10 CFR 73.5. Therefore, granting an exemption is explicitly authorized by the NRC's regulations.

The Exemption Request Will Not Endanger Life or Property or the Common Defense and Security

Approval of an exemption to allow as a minimum either a certified fuel handler or a licensed senior operator to suspend security measures in an emergency or during severe weather at VY (i.e. a plant for which the certifications required by 10 CFR 50.82(a)(1) have been submitted) will not endanger life or property. The certified fuel handler will be sufficiently trained and qualified to approve the suspension of security measures. The exemption would not reduce the measures currently in place to protect against radiological sabotage. In addition, the common defense and security would not be adversely affected as a result of this exemption because the exemption does not reduce the overall effectiveness of the Physical Security Plan, Training and Qualification Plan, or Safeguards Contingency Plan. Therefore, allowing a certified fuel handler or a licensed senior operator as a minimum to approve the suspension of security measures in an emergency or during severe weather does not adversely affect public health and safety issues or the assurance of the common defense and security.

The Exemption is in the Public Interest

An exemption to allow, as a minimum, either a certified fuel handler or a licensed senior operator to suspend security measures for an emergency or during severe weather at VY does not present a risk to the public health and safety. The exemption will allow a trained, qualified individual to approve the suspension of security measures in an emergency or during severe weather. The exemption will maintain the current level of safety, be consistent with 10 CFR 50.54(y) and avoid an unnecessary impact on the decommissioning trust fund from the costs associated with maintaining a redundant training program.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The proposed exemption meets the eligibility criterion for categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(25), because the proposed exemption involves: (i) no significant hazards consideration; (ii) no significant change in the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite; (iii) no significant increase in individual or cumulative public or occupational radiation exposure; (iv) no significant construction impact; (v) no significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents; and (vi) the requirements from which the exemption is sought involve safeguards plans or other requirements of an administrative, managerial or organizational nature. Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the proposed exemption.

(i) No Significant Hazards Consideration Determination

ENO has evaluated the proposed exemption to determine whether or not a significant hazards consideration is involved by focusing on the three standards set forth in 10

CFR 50.92 as discussed below:

1. Does the proposed exemption involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated?

The proposed exemption would allow either a licensed senior operator or a certified fuel handler to suspend security measures in an emergency or during severe weather at VY (i.e., a plant for which the certifications required by 10 CFR 50.82(a)(1) have been submitted). The proposed exemption has no effect on plant structures, systems, and components (SSCs) and no effect on the capability of any plant SSC to perform its design function, and therefore would not increase the likelihood of a malfunction of any plant SSC. The proposed exemption does not alter any assumptions or methodology associated with the previously evaluated accidents in the VY Updated Final Safety Analysis Report. The exemption will not affect the probability of occurrence of any previously analyzed accident.

Therefore, the proposed exemption does not involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated.

2. Does the proposed exemption create the possibility of a new or different kind of accident from any accident previously evaluated?

The proposed exemption does not involve a physical alteration of the plant. No new or different type of equipment will be installed and there are no physical modifications to existing equipment associated with the proposed exemption.

Similarly, the proposed exemption would not physically change any SSCs involved in the mitigation of any accidents. Thus, no new initiators or precursors of a new or different kind of accident are created. Furthermore, the proposed exemption does not create the possibility of a new accident as a result of new failure modes associated with any equipment or personnel failures. No changes are being made to parameters within which the plant is normally operated, or in the setpoints which initiate protective or mitigative actions, and no new failure modes are being introduced.

Therefore, the proposed exemption does not create the possibility of a new or different kind of accident from any accident previously evaluated.

3. Does the proposed exemption involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety?

The proposed exemption does not alter the design basis or any safety limits for the plant. The proposed exemption does not impact station operation or any plant SSC that is relied upon for accident mitigation.

Therefore, the proposed exemption does not involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety.

Based on the above, ENO concludes that a finding of "no significant hazards consideration" is justified for the proposed exemption.

(ii) There is no significant change in the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite.

There are no expected changes in the types, characteristics, or quantities of effluents discharged to the environment associated with the proposed exemption. There are no materials or chemicals introduced into the plant that could affect the characteristics or types of effluents released offsite. In addition, the method of operation of waste processing systems will not be affected by the exemption. The proposed exemption will not result in changes to the design basis requirements of SSCs that function to limit or monitor the release of effluents. All the SSCs associated with limiting the release of effluents will continue to be able to perform their functions. Therefore, the proposed exemption will result in no significant change to the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite.

(iii) There is no significant increase in individual or cumulative public or occupational radiation exposure.

The exemption would result in no expected increases in individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure on either the workforce or the public. There are no expected changes in normal occupational doses. Likewise, design basis accident dose is not impacted by the proposed exemption.

(iv) There is no significant construction impact.

No construction activities are associated with the proposed exemption.

(v) There is no significant increase in the potential for consequences from radiological accidents.

See the no significant hazards considerations discussion in Item (i) above.

(vi) The requirements from which exemptions are sought involve safeguard plans or other requirements of an administrative, managerial or organizational nature.

The purpose of the exemption is to change the requirements in 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(i) and 10 CFR 73.55(p)(1)(ii) to permit either a licensed senior operator or a certified fuel handler to approve the suspension of security measures in an emergency or during severe weather.

REFERENCES

1. Letter, Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. to USNRC, "Notification of Permanent Cessation of Power Operations," BVY 13-079, dated September 23, 2013
2. Federal Register Notice, Vol. 60, No. 139 (60 FR 37374), Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Reactors, dated July 20, 1995