

all individuals while inside the protected area.

It should also be noted that the proposed system is only for individuals with authorized unescorted access and will not be used for those individuals requiring escorts.

Sandia National Laboratories conducted testing that demonstrated that the hand geometry equipment possesses strong performance characteristics. Details of the testing performed are in the Sandia report, "A Performance Evaluation of Biometric Identification Devices," SAND91-0276 UC-906 Unlimited Release, June 1991. Based on the Sandia report and the licensee's experience using the current photo picture identification system, the false acceptance rate for the proposed hand geometry system would be at least equivalent to that of the current system. To assure that the proposed system will continue to meet the general performance requirements of 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5), the licensee will implement a process for testing the system. The site security plan will also be revised to allow implementation of the hand geometry system and to allow employees and contractors with unescorted access to keep their picture badges in their possession when leaving the Palisades site.

IV

For the foregoing reasons, the NRC staff has determined that the proposed alternative measures for protection against radiological sabotage meet the same high assurance objective and the general performance requirements of 10 CFR 73.55. In addition, the staff has determined that the overall level of the proposed system's performance will provide protection against radiological sabotage equivalent to that which is provided by the current system in accordance with 10 CFR 73.55.

Accordingly, the Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 73.5, this exemption is authorized by law, will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security, and is otherwise in the public interest. Therefore, the Commission hereby grants the following exemption:

The requirement of 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5) that individuals who have been granted unescorted access and are not employed by the licensee are to return their picture badges upon exit from the protected area is no longer necessary. Thus, these individuals may keep their picture badges in their possession upon leaving the Palisades site. The exemption is granted on the condition that the licensee implements a system testing process and revises the

site security plan as discussed in Section III above.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the granting of this exemption will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (62 FR 22975).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 14th day of May, 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Samuel J. Collins,

Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-368]

Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., et al.; Notice of Withdrawal of Application for Amendment to Facility Operating License

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) has granted the request of Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (the licensee) to withdraw its April 22, 1996, application for proposed amendment to Facility Operating License No. NPF-8 for the Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant, Unit 2, located in Houston County, Alabama.

The proposed amendment would have revised the facility technical specifications pertaining to implementation of an L* repair criteria for the FNP Unit 2 steam generators.

The Commission had previously issued a Notice of Consideration of Issuance of Amendment published in the **Federal Register** on July 3, 1996 (61 FR 34899). However, by letter dated May 5, 1997, the licensee withdrew the proposed change.

For further details with respect to this action, see the application for amendment dated April 22, 1996, as supplemented by letters dated May 3, July 25, August 30, September 16 and 19, and October 8, 1996, and the licensee's letter dated May 5, 1997, which withdrew the application for license amendment. The above documents are 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 Houston-Love Memorial Library, 212 W. Burdeshaw Street, Post Office Box 1369, Dothan, Alabama.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 14th day of May 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Jacob I. Zimmerman,

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

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-334]

Duquesne Light Company; Ohio Edison Company; Pennsylvania Power Company; Beaver Valley Power Station, Unit No. 1; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an amendment to Facility Operating License No. DPR-66, issued to Duquesne Light Company, et al. (the licensee), for operation of the Beaver Valley Power Station, Unit No. 1 (BVPS-1), located in Beaver County, Pennsylvania.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed amendment would revise BVPS-1 Technical Specification (TS) 5.3.1.2 to allow storage of new reactor fuel in the new fuel storage racks with an enrichment not to exceed a nominal 5.0 weight percent Uranium-235.

The proposed amendment is in accordance with the licensee's application for dated February 27, 1997.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed changes to the Facility Operating License are needed so that the licensee can store and use more highly enriched fuel, and thereby provide the flexibility of extending the fuel irradiation/burnup to permit longer fuel cycles (i.e., longer continuous period of operation). Use of the proposed more highly enriched fuels would require the use of fewer fuel assemblies over the remaining life of the plant.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed revisions to the TS. The proposed revisions would permit storage of new fuel in the new fuel storage racks and subsequent use of fuel enriched with Uranium-235 (U-235) to a nominal 5.0 weight percent (5.0 weight percent plus a tolerance of 0.05 weight percent). The safety considerations associated with the storage of and subsequent reactor