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U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
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Subject: Arkansas Nuclear One - Unit 1  
Docket No. 50-313  
License No. DPR-51  
Request to Extend the Exemption to Permit Storage of Burnable Poison Rod  
Assemblies in Ventilated Storage Casks

Gentlemen:

Entergy Operations requests an extension to the exemption from the requirements of 10CFR72.212(a)(2) and 10CFR72.214 which was previously approved by the Staff on April 9, 1999. As discussed below, the uncertainties associated with promulgation of a final rule to allow storage of burnable poison rod assemblies (BPRAs) in Ventilated Storage Casks (VSCs) has necessitated this request to ensure that the Arkansas Nuclear One, Unit 1 (ANO-1), spent fuel pool (SFP) retains full core offload reserves after the next ANO-1 refueling outage.

Entergy Operations began discussions with Sierra Nuclear Corporation (SNC) and the NRC Staff about the storage of control components in VSCs in late 1992. It was decided at that time not to pursue the addition of control components to the submittal then under review in order to avoid potential delays to the initial issuance of the Certificate of Compliance (CoC) for use by general licensees. The CoC was subsequently issued in May 1993. On June 14, 1993, SNC submitted a Safety Analysis Report revision for Staff approval that included storage of control components. The Staff and SNC worked to resolve items identified during the Staff's review through 1996. Entergy Operations loaded its first VSC in December 1996. During 1998, BNFL Fuel Solutions (SNC's successor) withdrew the 1993 amendment request for reasons unrelated to BPRA storage and subsequently submitted a new request tailored specifically for the storage of BPRAs in B&W 15x15 fuel on December 30, 1998. On January 18, 1999 (1CAN019904), Entergy Operations submitted an exemption request to allow storage of BPRAs in VSCs until rulemaking based on the December 30, 1998, amendment request had been completed. The Staff issued the requested exemption on April 9, 1999 (1CNA049902), but with limitations on the number of casks that could be loaded with BPRAs

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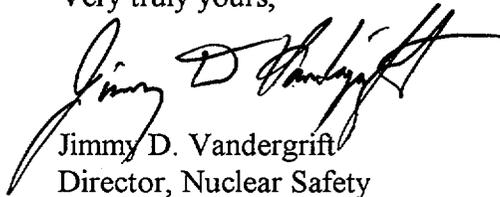
and a time limit by which the casks had to be loaded (September 1999). Entergy Operations subsequently loaded the allowed four casks with fuel containing BPRAs within the limits of the exemption. On September 22, 1999, a proposed rule was published for comment in the Federal Register to allow storage of BPRAs in VSCs. The comment period for the proposed rule expired October 22, 1999. To date, the final rule has not been issued.

Entergy Operations currently plans to load five VSCs during 2000. Cask loading should commence in February with the loading of two casks containing CE 16x16 fuel from ANO-2. Loading of ANO-1 fuel containing BPRAs is anticipated to begin in early April. Three VSCs must be loaded this spring/summer with B&W 15x15 fuel containing BPRAs to avoid loss of full core offload reserves in the ANO-1 SFP immediately after the 1R16 refueling outage. This timing is due to the length of time associated with mobilizing and demobilizing equipment to load casks, the anticipated length of the ANO-2 refueling outage scheduled for the fall when steam generators will be replaced, and the time associated with new fuel receipt prior to both the 2000 ANO-2 refueling outage and the early 2001 ANO-1 refueling outage. Even if rulemaking was completed and the final rule published in the Federal Register prior to Entergy Operation's anticipated load date for ANO-1 fuel, the effective date of 75 days after publication included in the proposed rule would delay loading to the point that full core offload capability could not be maintained.

The technical and regulatory considerations discussed in the January 18, 1999, exemption request, as well as the December 30, 1998, amendment request, remain valid for this extension request. Only B&W 15x15 fuel with an initial enrichment of uranium-235 less than 3.3 weight percent will be used when loading BPRAs in VSCs. The SFP boron concentration shall continue to be  $\geq 2850$  ppm boron as required by the current CoC.

In summary, Entergy Operations requests an extension to the previously-approved exemption to allow storage of BPRAs in VSCs until the effective date of the pending rulemaking in order to ensure that full core offload reserves will be maintained at ANO-1. Approval is requested by March 15, 2000, to allow time for review/revision of affected documentation prior to actual loading. Should you have questions concerning this submittal, please contact me.

Very truly yours,



Jimmy D. Vandergrift  
Director, Nuclear Safety

JDV/jjd

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