



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
4101 Woolworth Avenue
Omaha NE 68105

March 6, 2000

In Reply Refer To: 636/151C

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

Re: Amendment to Technical Specifications; Docket 50 - 131

Gentlemen:

This letter is written to request amendment to the Technical Specifications at the A. J. Blotcky Reactor Facility in accordance with 10 CFR 50.90 and 10 CRF 50.4. Our facilities Technical Specifications (TS) currently require us to perform quarterly visual inspections of four or more fuel elements a calendar quarter not to exceed 4 months. Our facility has been in operation with its present core since 1959 with the exception of an additional new element added in 1994. No damaged or faulty elements have been discovered during our long history at 20KW of operation.

Inspection of fuel elements involves physical removal and manipulation of each element for visual inspection. Such activities increase the risk of damage via collision of the elements with other core structures. In addition, there is an increase chance of dropping the element during inspection as well. In order to reduce the risk of fuel damage and in light of our inspection history, we propose to alter our current inspection schedule. It may also be noted that the proposed schedule would reflect the criteria set forth in NUREG 1537, Part 1, Appendix 14.1.

As a result, we would replace TS Section 4.3 of our current tech specs with the proposed TS 4.3 presented as Attachment #1, subject to your approval.

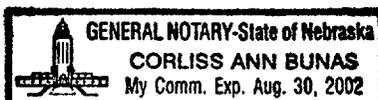
Sincerely,

JOHN J. PHILLIPS
Director

Enclosure: Attachment #1

cc: Alexander Adams, Jr.

After being duly sworn, the person known to be John J. Phillips, Director of the Omaha Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Omaha, Nebraska, signed the above document this 10TH day of MARCH, 2000.



A001

ATTACHMENT #1

4.3 Fuel Element Inspection

Applicability: This specification applies to the inspection requirements for the fuel elements.

Objective: The objective is to verify the continuing integrity of the fuel element cladding.

Specifications: The reactor fuel elements shall be examined for physical damage by a visual inspection at least once each five years, with at least 20 percent of the fuel elements examined each year. Observation will include inspection for swelling, cracks, corrosion, and pitting.

The reactor shall not be operated with damaged fuel except to detect and identify damaged fuel for removal. A fuel element shall be removed from the core if a clad defect exists as indicated by the release of fission products. If an annual inspection identifies damaged fuel, then the entire core would be inspected.

Basis: The frequency of examination allows each element to be inspected every 5 years. Previous inspection experience has shown that this frequency of inspection is adequate and thus reduces the risk of accident or damage fuel to handling.