

April 12, 1999

Mr. James W. Langenbach, Vice President
and Director, TMI-1
GPU Nuclear, Inc.
P.O. Box 480
Middletown, PA 17057

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
REGARDING AN EXEMPTION FROM REQUIREMENTS OF 10 CFR 50,
APPENDIX R - THREE MILE ISLAND NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION,
UNIT 1 (TMI-1) (TAC NO. M97747)

Dear Mr. Langenbach:

Enclosed is a copy of the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact related to your application for exemption dated December 31, 1996, as supplemented September 8 and December 30, 1997; May 21, October 14, November 25, and December 23, 1998. The proposed action would grant an exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 50, Appendix R, in certain fire areas and zones, to the extent that it requires the enclosure of cable and equipment and non-safety circuits necessary to achieve safe shutdown in a fire barrier having a 1-hour fire endurance rating.

The assessment is being forwarded to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

/s/

Timothy G. Colburn, Senior Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-289

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment

cc w/encl: See next page

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

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GPU Nuclear, Inc.
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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Timothy G. Colburn".

Timothy G. Colburn, Senior Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-289

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment

cc w/encl: See next page

J. Langenbach
Three Mile Island Nuclear Station, Unit No. 1

cc:

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSIONGPU NUCLEAR, INC., ET AL.DOCKET NO. 50-289THREE MILE ISLAND NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION, UNIT 1ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OFNO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption from certain requirements of 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix R for Facility Operating License No. DPR-50 issued to GPU Nuclear, Inc., et al., (GPU or the licensee), for operation of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station, Unit 1 (TMI-1), located in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTIdentification of the Proposed Action:

Section III.G.2.c of Appendix R to 10 CFR Part 50 requires the enclosure of cable and equipment and associated non-safety circuits of one redundant train of systems necessary to achieve and maintain safe shutdown in a fire barrier having a 1-hour rating. In addition, fire detectors and an automatic fire suppression system shall be installed in the fire area. The licensee is seeking an exemption from these requirements for 10 fire areas/zones: AB-FZ-3, AB-FZ-4, AB-FZ-5, AB-FZ-7, CB-FA-1, FH-FZ-1, FH-FZ-2, FH-FZ-6, ISPH-FZ-1 and ISPH-FZ-2.

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The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for exemption dated December 31, 1996, as supplemented September 8 and December 30, 1997; May 21, October 14, November 25, and December 23, 1998.

The Need for the Proposed Action:

The licensee is requesting an exemption from Appendix R, Section III.G.2.c because modifications to achieve full compliance would cost approximately \$1.0 million. The proposed action is needed to reduce the financial hardship of modifying existing barriers to achieve a 1-hour fire rating, which modification would provide minimal safety benefit according to the licensee.

Environment Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that reasonable assurance has been provided in fire zones/areas AB-FZ-4, CB-FA-1, FH-FZ-1, FH-FZ-6, IPSH-FZ-1, and ISPH-FZ-2, that one division of components necessary to achieve safe shutdown will remain free of fire damage. Although the installed Thermo-Lag barriers in these fire zones/areas have less than a 1-hour fire endurance rating, they do have some significant resistance to fire. Additionally, the areas where most of the subject barriers are located have a low combustible loading, have manual suppression capability and are equipped with automatic detection and suppression. The licensee has committed to install automatic suppression in fire zone FH-FZ-6. Additionally, the licensee has committed to install combustible gas detectors in fire area CB-FA-1, which would provide prompt identification of an acetylene gas leak and allow isolation of the gas at its source prior to reaching the explosive limit. The staff has determined that the combination of these features and circumstances provides a level of protection adequate to meet the underlying purpose of the rule. The Commission has determined that the exemption for fire zones AB-FZ-3, AB-FZ-5,

AB-FZ-7, and FH-FZ-2 should be denied because an adequate level of fire safety would not be achieved.

The proposed action (hereinafter to mean the granting of an exemption for fire zones/areas AB-FZ-4, CB-FA-1, FH-FZ-1, FH-FZ-6, ISPH-FZ-1, and ISPH-FZ-2) will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluents that may be released off site, and there is no significant increase in occupational or public radiation exposure. Therefore, there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential non-radiological impacts, the proposed action does not involve any historic sites. It does not affect non-radiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, there are no significant non-radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Accordingly, the Commission concludes there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action:

As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action (i.e., the "no-action" alternative). Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts.

The environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternative action are similar.

Alternative Use of Resources:

This action does not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement for the Three Mile Island Nuclear Station.

Agencies and persons Consulted:

In accordance with its stated policy, on January 13, 1999, the staff consulted with the Pennsylvania State official, Mr. Stan J. Maingi, of the Bureau of Radiation Protection, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

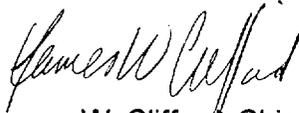
On the basis of the environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed action.

For further details with respect to the proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated December 31, 1996, as supplemented September 8 and December 30, 1997; May 21, October 14, November 25, and December 23, 1998, which 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 LAW/Government

Publications Section, State Library of Pennsylvania, (Regional Depository) Walnut Street and
Commonwealth Avenue, P.O. Box 1601, Harrisburg, PA 17105.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 12th day of April 1999.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION



James W. Clifford, Chief, Section 2
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation