

April 4, 1997

Mr. Robert G. Byram
Senior Vice President-Nuclear
Pennsylvania Power and Light Company
2 North Ninth Street
Allentown, PA 18101

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT,
RELATED TO IMPROVED TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS, SUSQUEHANNA STEAM
ELECTRIC STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2 (TAC NOS. M98005 AND M98006)

Dear Mr. Byram:

An environmental assessment was prepared in response to your application for a license amendment dated February 11, 1997. The proposed amendment adopts two sections of the Improved Technical Specifications (ITS) originally submitted by Pennsylvania Power & Light Company (PP&L) on August 1, 1996. These sections are related to the movement of control rods during CONDITIONS 3 and 4, have been formatted to be added to the current TSs with this amendment, and will permit certain tests to be conducted during refueling outages.

We have enclosed a copy of the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for this proposed amendment which is being forwarded to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

/s/

Chester Poslusny, Senior Project Manager
Project Directorate I-2
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-387/388

cc: See next page

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Poslusny" followed by the word "for".

Chester Poslusny, Senior Project Manager
Project Directorate I-2
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-387/388

cc: See next page

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Pennsylvania Power & Light Company

Susquehanna Steam Electric Station,
Units 1 & 2

cc:

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
PENNSYLVANIA POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY
SUSQUEHANNA STEAM ELECTRIC STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2
DOCKET NOS. 50-387 AND 50-388
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 Nos. DPR-14 and DPR-22, issued to Pennsylvania Power and Light Company (PP&L) (the licensee), for the operation of Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (SSES), Units 1 and 2, located at the licensee's site in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed amendment will add to the current SSES Technical Specifications (TSs) (Special Test Exception Section 3.10.7 and 3.10.8), the Improved Technical Specifications Sections (ITS) 3.10.3 and 3.10.4 in a modified format and with applicable cross references.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's amendment request dated February 11, 1997.

The Need for the Proposed Action

It has been recognized that nuclear safety in all plants would benefit from improvement and standardization of TSs. The "NRC Interim Policy Statement on Technical Specification Improvements for Nuclear Power Reactors," (52 FR 3788, February 6, 1987) and later the Final Policy Statement (58 FR 39132, July 22, 1993), formalized this need. To facilitate the

development of individual ITS, each reactor vendor owners group (OG) and the NRC staff developed standard TS (STS). For General Electric (GE) plants, the STS are NUREG-1433 for BWR/4 reactor facilities and NUREG-1434 for BWR/6 facilities. NUREG-1433 formed the basis of the SSES ITS. The NRC Committee to Review Generic Requirements (CRGR) reviewed the STS and made note of the safety merits of the STS and indicated its support of conversion to the STS by operating plants.

Description of the Proposed Change

The February 11, 1997 submittal requested that two sections be approved prior to the staff approval of the entire ITS to adopt Sections 3.10.3 and 3.10.4 of the ITS into the current TS Special Test Exception Sections 3.10.3 and 3.10.4. This change will permit control rod testing during refueling outages. The only creditable accident associated with control rod testing during the refuel outage is the "Rod Withdrawal Error - Low Power" and is addressed in Section 15.4.1 of SSES Updated Final Safety Analysis Report (UFSAR).

The February 11, 1997 request is part of a larger amendment request submitted on August 1, 1996. The requests are based on NUREG-1433 and on guidance provided in the above-referenced Policy Statement. If granted, the amendments would completely rewrite, reformat, and streamline the existing TSs. Emphasis is placed on human factors principles to improve clarity and understanding. The Bases section would be significantly expanded to clarify and better explain the purpose and foundation of each specification. In addition to NUREG-1433, portions of the existing TSs were also used as the

basis for the ITS. Plant-specific issues (unique design features, requirements, and operating practices) were discussed at length with the licensee, and generic matters with the OGS.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

As stated above, the only plausible consequence of the proposed action is a rod withdrawal error during low power. The effects of such an error were analyzed in "Rod Withdrawal Error-Low Power," Section 15.4.1 of the UFSAR. This analysis indicates that withdrawal of a single rod during refueling is insufficient to cause criticality and thus no radioactive materials would be released. The proposed change to the TSs does not change this conclusion.

Additionally, the proposed revision to the TS was found to provide control of plant operations, specifically control of rod movement during CONDITIONS 3 and 4. Thus, reasonable assurance will be provided that the health and safety of the public will be adequately protected.

These TS changes will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluent that may be released offsite, and there is no significant increase in the allowable individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed TS amendment.

With regard to potential non-radiological impacts, the proposed amendment involves features located entirely within the restricted areas as defined in 10 CFR Part 20. It does not affect non-radiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant non-radiological impacts associated with the proposed amendment.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

The Commission has concluded there are no significant environmental impacts, associated with the proposed amendment. Any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact need not be evaluated. As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action. Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and the no-action alternative action are similar.

Alternative Use of Resources

This action does not involve the use of any resources not considered previously in the Final Environmental Statement for the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, Units 1 and 2, dated June 1981.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on March 27, 1997, the staff consulted with the Pennsylvania State official, Mr. David Ney of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Bureau of Radiation Protection, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

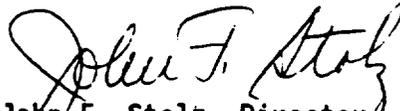
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon 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 this proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated February 11, 1997. The letter is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20555, and at the local public document room located at the Osterhout Free Library, Reference Department, 71 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 4th day of April 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John F. Stolz".

John F. Stolz, Director
Project Directorate I-2
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation