DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Nebraska/Western Iowa Health Care System
4101 Woolworth Avenue
Omaha NE 68105

March 29, 2001

636/151

In Reply Refer To:

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
ATTN: Document Control Desk
Washington, D.C. 20555

SUBJ: 10 CFR 50.59 Annual Report

REF: License R-57 Docket #50-131

The following report is submitted for the period January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000 in accordance with Paragraph 50.59, Title 10, Code of Federal Regulations.

1 (a) The proposed change to Section 4.3 of our Technical Specifications was approved by the NRC. This change involved the fuel inspection schedule and cycle for the reactor elements. Our facilities Technical Specifications (TS) previously had required 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 had our current inspection schedule changed. Now, the inspection cycle is such that 20% of the core fuel elements are to be inspected annually with each element inspected within 5 years. It may also be noted that the proposed schedule would reflect the criteria set forth in NUREG 1537, Part 1, Appendix 14.1.

(b) The fuel element inspections indicate nothing out of the ordinary. All elements appear to be in good condition. Annual inspection of the facility control rods found the rods to be in good condition. The reactor was power calibrated in accordance with the SOP. All measuring channels were adjusted to match the calibrated value. The control rods were calibrated using the integral method. The total excess reactivity was determined to be $0.97, which is in compliance with TS 3.2(2). The shut down margin was $2.28 meeting the requirement stated in TS 3.2(1). Time of Flight measurements show full rod insertion times no greater than 0.5 seconds for any of the three control rods. This is less than the limitation established in TS 3.3.1.

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2. Tabulation showing the energy generated by the reactor:

Month	Total KW-Hr
January	6
February	0
March	14.4
April	0
May	0
June	74.4
July	0
August	107.7
September	0
October	16.2
November	0
December	0
Total 2000	218.7

3. During 2000 there was one unscheduled shutdown due to a noise spike, causing a period trip at a low power level.

4. During 2000 there was no major safety related corrective maintenance performed.

5 (a) No changes were made as described in the Safety Analysis Report.

(b) There were no changes to procedures as described in the Safety Analysis Report.

(c) There were no new or untried experiments or tests performed during the reporting period that are not described in the Safety Analysis Report.

6. There were no changes made under 10 CFR 50.59 with respect to the relevance of a unreviewed safety question.

7. Summary of radioactive effluents released or discharged beyond the effective control of the license:
(a) Liquid - none
(b) Airborne - < 1mCi
(c) Solid – none

8. During 2000 there were no outside environmental radiological surveys performed.

The reactor facility continues to be without a Scientific Director. A VA site visit Committee reviewed the research aspect of the facility in the autumn of 1999. Their recommendation to VA Central Office was to provide the necessary funds to reestablish research projects at the facility. Funding for research, however, has not yet

been issued and continues to undergo administrative review. The reactor continues to receive its yearly budget for operation.

An additional employee is currently being sought in order to train that individual for a SRO license.

The Reactor Facility continues to be utilized for medical research with emphasis on the current health needs of the veteran. The facility also continues to be used by the Fort Calhoun Nuclear Power Station as a part of their operator-training program.

Sincerely,

GARY N. NUGENT
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Alexander Adams Jr.