

September 24, 1999

Mr. G. R. Peterson
Site Vice President
Catawba Nuclear Station
Duke Energy Corporation
4800 Concord Road
York, South Carolina 29745-9635

SUBJECT: CATAWBA NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2 RE: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT RELATED TO ISSUANCE OF EXEMPTIONS TO THE OPERATING LICENSES (TAC NOS. MA5908 AND MA5909)

Dear Mr. Peterson:

Enclosed is a copy of an "Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact" related to your request for exemption dated June 22, 1999. The exemption would exempt Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, from the requirement of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Section 54.17(c) which specifies that a licensee may apply for a renewed operating license no earlier than 20 years before the expiration of the operating license currently in effect. This assessment has been forwarded to the Office of the *Federal Register* for publication.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:
Peter S. Tam, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing and Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-413 and 50-414

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

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Site Vice President
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Duke Energy Corporation
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Peter S. Tam, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing and Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-413 and 50-414

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment

cc w/encl: See next page

Catawba Nuclear Station

cc:

Mr. Gary Gilbert
Regulatory Compliance Manager
Duke Energy Corporation
4800 Concord Road
York, South Carolina 29745

Ms. Lisa F. Vaughn
Legal Department (PB05E)
Duke Energy Corporation
422 South Church Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28201-1006

Anne Cottingham, Esquire
Winston and Strawn
1400 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

North Carolina Municipal Power
Agency Number 1
1427 Meadowwood Boulevard
P. O. Box 29513
Raleigh, North Carolina 27626

County Manager of York County
York County Courthouse
York, South Carolina 29745

Piedmont Municipal Power Agency
121 Village Drive
Greer, South Carolina 29651

Ms. Karen E. Long
Assistant Attorney General
North Carolina Department of Justice
P. O. Box 629
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602

Elaine Wathen, Lead REP Planner
Division of Emergency Management
116 West Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603-1335

North Carolina Electric Membership
Corporation
P. O. Box 27306
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

Senior Resident Inspector
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
4830 Concord Road
York, South Carolina 29745

Virgil R. Autry, Director
Division of Radioactive Waste Management
Bureau of Land and Waste Management
Department of Health and Environmental
Control
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201-1708

L. A. Keller
Manager - Nuclear Regulatory
Licensing
Duke Energy Corporation
526 South Church Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28201-1006

Saluda River Electric
P. O. Box 929
Laurens, South Carolina 29360

Mr. Steven P. Shaver
Senior Sales Engineer
Westinghouse Electric Company
5929 Carnegie Blvd.
Suite 500
Charlotte, North Carolina 28209

Catawba Nuclear Station

cc:

Mr. T. Richard Puryear
Owners Group (NCEMC)
Duke Energy Corporation
4800 Concord Road
York, South Carolina 29745

Richard M. Fry, Director
Division of Radiation Protection
North Carolina Department of
Environment, Health, and
Natural Resources
3825 Barrett Drive
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-7721

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSIONDUKE ENERGY CORPORATIONDOCKET NOS. 50-413 AND 50-414CATAWBA NUCLEAR STATION, UNITS 1 AND 2ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption to 10 CFR Section 54.17(c), for Facility Operating Licenses No. NPF-35 and NPF-52, issued to Duke Energy Corporation (the licensee) for operation of Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, located in York County, South Carolina.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTIdentification of Proposed Action:

The proposed action would exempt the licensee from certain requirements of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Section 54.17(c), which specifies that a licensee may not apply for a renewed operating license earlier than 20 years before the expiration of the operating license currently in effect. Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, will not have met this schedular requirement by June 13, 2001 (the earliest date the licensee may apply concurrently for renewed licenses for the Catawba and McGuire units, see below). The proposed action is in response to the licensee's application dated June 22, 1999.

The Need for the Proposed Action:

The licensee requested an exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 54.17(c), which requires that an application for a renewed license may not be submitted to the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) earlier than 20 years before the expiration of the operating

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license currently in effect. The current operating license for McGuire, Unit 1, expires on June 12, 2021, and for McGuire, Unit 2, on March 3, 2023. The current operating license for Catawba, Unit 1, expires on December 6, 2024, and for Catawba, Unit 2, on February 24, 2026. If the licensee submits the renewal applications on the earliest possible date, June 13, 2001, when McGuire, Unit 1, meets the 20-year limit contained in Section 54.17(c), McGuire, Unit 2, will have approximately 18.3 years of operating experience and Catawba, Units 1 and 2, approximately 16.5 years and 15.3 years operating experience, respectively.

In its request, the licensee stated that business considerations dictate preparation and submission of concurrent license renewal applications for McGuire and Catawba. Further, the licensee stated that submission of such renewal applications in 2001, as opposed to some time thereafter, is necessary to obtain the full amount of the potential cost savings. To support preparation of the July 1998 Oconee Nuclear Station renewal applications, the licensee assembled a team of individuals with relevant experience in necessary disciplines to prepare the applications and to remain dedicated to the renewal effort throughout the period of NRC staff review. According to the licensee, granting the exemption request would allow it to use this same team of qualified and experienced professionals to prepare its McGuire and Catawba renewal applications. Thus, the licensee states that it can avoid redeployment costs that would arise if it were unable to proceed promptly with preparation of additional renewal applications.

The licensee's submittal of June 22, 1999, addressed both sites and all four units, but specifically sought schedular exemptions for Catawba, Units 1 and 2 and McGuire Unit 2. This Environmental Assessment only addresses the licensee's request for schedular exemption for Catawba, Units 1 and 2.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The staff has completed its evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposed exemption. The exemption, if granted, will permit the licensee to apply for renewal of the

existing operating licenses sooner than would be allowed under the schedule specified by 10 CFR 54.17(c). Should the licensee apply to renew the licenses for the Catawba units, the environmental impacts of operating them under the renewed licenses would then be evaluated by the licensee and the staff. In short, granting of the exemption will not necessitate, or lead to, changes to the as-built plant design or existing procedures at the two Catawba units.

The staff evaluated potential radiological environmental impacts associated with granting the requested exemption. Since no plant design change or procedure change will be made, no new accident causal mechanisms would be introduced. For the same reason, the proposed exemption will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents previously evaluated by the staff (Catawba Safety Evaluation Report, NUREG-0954 dated February 1983 and supplements), will not change the types of effluents that may be released offsite, and will not increase the allowable individual or public radiation exposure (Catawba Final Environmental Impact Statement, NUREG-0921 dated January 1983). Therefore, there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

The staff also evaluated potential nonradiological impacts. On the basis that the proposed exemption involves no plant design change or procedure change, the staff finds that the proposed exemption does not affect any historic sites, does not increase or decrease nonradiological plant effluents, and has no other environmental impact from those previously evaluated by the staff (Catawba Final Environmental Impact Statement, NUREG-0921). Therefore, there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Accordingly, the staff concludes that 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. Thus, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and the 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 Impact Statement related to the Catawba Nuclear Station (NUREG-0921).

Agencies and Persons Contacted:

In accordance with its stated policy, on September 22, 1999, the staff consulted with the South Carolina State official, Mr. Virgil Autrey, of the Bureau of Land and Waste Management, Department of Health and Environmental Control, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. Mr. Autrey had no comments.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT


On the basis of the environmental assessment, the staff concludes that the proposed exemption will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the staff 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 request for the exemptions dated June 22, 1999, which is 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 York County Library, 138 East Black Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 24th day of September 1999.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter S. Tam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P".

Peter S. Tam, Senior Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate II
Division of Licensing and Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation