

September 8, 1998

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 - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT RELATED TO ISSUANCE OF AMENDMENTS TO THE OPERATING LICENSES (TAC NOS. M95298 AND M95299)

Dear Mr. Peterson:

Enclosed is a copy of an "Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact" related to your request for amendments dated May 27, 1997, which was supplemented by your letters dated March 9, March 20, April 20, June 3, June 24, July 7, July 21, and August 5, 1998, that would revise the Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, operating licenses to revise the Catawba Technical Specifications to be consistent with the Improved Standard Technical Specifications conveyed by NUREG-1431 (April 1995). This assessment has been forwarded to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Peter S. Tam, Senior Project Manager
Project Directorate II-2
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-413 and 50-414

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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Peter S. Tam, Senior Project Manager
Project Directorate II-2
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-413 and 50-414

Enclosure: Environmental Assessment

cc w/encl: See next page

Catawba Nuclear Station

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Catawba Nuclear Station

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSIONDUKE ENERGY CORPORATION, ET AL.DOCKET 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 amendments to Facility Operating License Nos. NPF-35 and NPF-52, issued to Duke Energy Corporation, et al. (the licensee), for operation of the Catawba Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, located in York County, South Carolina.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTIdentification of Proposed Action:

The proposed action would amend the Catawba Facility Operating Licenses (FOLs) for Units 1 and 2 and to revise the Catawba Technical Specifications (TSs) to be consistent with the Improved Standard Technical Specifications (ITS) conveyed by NUREG-1431 (April 1995).

The proposed action is in response to the licensee's application dated May 27, 1997, which was supplemented by letters dated March 9, March 20, April 20, June 3, June 24, July 7, July 21, and August 5, 1998.

The Need for the Proposed Action:

It has been recognized that nuclear safety in all plants would benefit from improvement and standardization of the TSs. The Commission's "NRC Interim Policy Statement on Technical Specification Improvements for Nuclear Power Reactors" (52 FR 3788, February 6, 1987), and later the Commission's "Final Policy Statement on Technical Specification

Improvements for Nuclear Power Reactors" (58 FR 39132, July 22, 1993), formalized this need. To facilitate the development of individual improved TSs, each reactor vendor owners group (OG) and the NRC staff developed standard TS (STS). For Westinghouse plants, the STS are published as NUREG-1431, and this document was the basis for the new Catawba Unit 1 and Unit 2 TSs. The NRC Committee to Review Generic Requirements 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 proposed revision to the TSs is based on NUREG-1431 and on guidance provided in the Final Policy Statement. Its objective is to completely rewrite, reformat, and streamline the existing TSs. Emphasis is placed on human factors principles to improve clarity and understanding. The Bases section has been significantly expanded to clarify and better explain the purpose and foundation of each specification. In addition to NUREG-1431, 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 OG.

The proposed changes from the existing TSs can be grouped into four general categories, as follows:

1. Nontechnical (administrative) changes, which were intended to make the ITS easier to use for plant operations personnel. They are purely editorial in nature or involve the movement or reformatting of requirements without affecting technical content. Every section of the Catawba TSs has undergone these types of changes. In order to ensure consistency, the NRC staff and the licensee have used NUREG-1431 as guidance to reformat and make other administrative changes.

2. Relocation of requirements, which includes items that were in the existing Catawba TSs. The TSs that are being relocated to licensee-controlled documents are not required to be in the TSs under 10 CFR 50.36 and do not meet any of the four criteria in the Commission's Final Policy Statement for inclusion in the TSs. They are not needed to obviate the possibility that an abnormal situation or event will give rise to an immediate threat to public health and safety. The NRC staff has concluded that appropriate controls have been established for all of the current specifications, information, and requirements that are being moved to licensee-controlled documents. In general, the proposed relocation of items in the Catawba TSs to the Updated Final Safety Analysis Report, appropriate plant-specific programs, procedures, and ITS Bases follows the guidance of NUREG-1431. Once these items have been relocated by removing them from the TSs to licensee-controlled documents, the licensee may revise them under the provisions of 10 CFR 50.59 or other NRC staff-approved control mechanisms, which provide appropriate procedural means to control changes.
3. More restrictive requirements, which consist of proposed Catawba ITS items that are either more conservative than corresponding requirements in the current Catawba TSs, or are additional restrictions that are not in the existing Catawba TSs but are contained in NUREG-1431. Examples of more restrictive requirements include: placing a limiting condition for operation on plant equipment that is not required by the present TS to be operable; more restrictive requirements to restore inoperable equipment; and more restrictive surveillance requirements.
4. Less restrictive requirements, which are relaxations of corresponding requirements in the existing Catawba TSs that provide little or no safety benefit and place unnecessary burdens on the licensee. These relaxations were the result of generic NRC actions or

other analyses. They have been justified on a case-by-case basis for Catawba and will be described in the staff's Safety Evaluation to be issued in support of the license amendments.

In addition to the changes previously described, the licensee proposed certain changes to the existing TSs that deviated from the STS in NUREG-1431. These additional proposed changes are described in the licensee's application and in the staff's Notices of Consideration of Issuance of Amendments to Facility Operating Licenses and Opportunity for a Hearing (63 FR 25106, 63 FR 27760, 63 FR 40553). Where these changes represent a change to the current licensing basis for Catawba, they have been justified on a case-by-case basis and will be described in the staff's Safety Evaluation to be issued in support of the license amendments.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that the proposed TS conversion would not increase the probability or consequences of accidents previously analyzed and would not affect facility radiation levels or facility radiological effluents.

Changes that are administrative in nature have been found to have no effect on the technical content of the TSs, and are acceptable. The increased clarity and understanding these changes bring to the TSs are expected to improve the operator's control of the plant in normal and accident conditions.

Relocation of requirements to licensee-controlled documents does not change the requirements themselves. Future changes to these requirements may be made by the licensee under 10 CFR 50.59 or other NRC-approved control mechanisms, which ensures continued maintenance of adequate requirements. All such relocations have been found to be in

conformance with the guidelines of NUREG-1431 and the Final Policy Statement, and, therefore, are acceptable.

Changes involving more restrictive requirements have been found to be acceptable and are likely to enhance the safety of plant operations.

Changes involving less restrictive requirements have been reviewed individually. When requirements have been shown to provide little or no safety benefit or to place unnecessary burdens on the licensee, their removal from the TSs was justified. In most cases, relaxations previously granted to individual plants on a plant-specific basis were the result of a generic NRC action, or of agreements reached during discussions with the OG and found to be acceptable for Catawba. Generic relaxations contained in NUREG-1431 as well as proposed deviations from NUREG-1431 have also been reviewed by the NRC staff and have been found to be acceptable.

In summary, the proposed revision to the TSs was found to provide control of plant operations such that reasonable assurance will be provided so 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 effluents that may be released offsite, and there is no significant increase in the allowable individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed action involves features located entirely within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Accordingly, the

Commission concludes that there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action:

Since the Commission has concluded there is no measurable environmental impact associated with the proposed amendments, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact need not be evaluated. The principal alternative to this action would be to deny the request for the amendments. Such action would not reduce the environmental impacts of plant operations.

Alternative Use of Resources:

This action did not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement related to the operation of Catawba Nuclear Station, Unit 1 and Unit 2.

Agencies and Persons Consulted:

In accordance with its stated policy, on August 25, 1998, the staff consulted with the South Carolina State official, Mr. Virgil Autry, Director, Division of Radioactive Waste Management. The State official had no comments.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

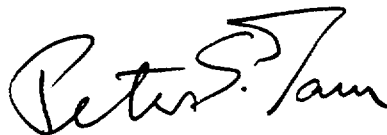
Based upon the environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.31 and 51.32, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed amendment.

For further details with respect to this action, see the licensee's letter dated May 27, 1997, which was supplemented by letters dated March 9, March 20, April 20, June 3, June 24, July 7, July 21, and August 5, 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 York County Library, 138 East Black Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 8th day of September 1998.

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
Project Directorate II-2
Division of Reactor Projects - I/II
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation