

July 10, 1995

Mr. Guy R. Horn
Vice President - Nuclear
Nebraska Public Power District
P. O. Box 499
Columbus, NE 68602-0499

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT-
EXEMPTION FROM 10 CFR PART 50, APPENDIX J - COOPER NUCLEAR STATION
(TAC NO. M91396)

Dear Mr. Horn:

Enclosed is a copy of the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact related to your application for exemption dated December 27, 1994. The proposed exemption from the requirements of Section III.D.2(a) of Appendix J to 10 CFR Part 50, would allow Type B testing (local leak rate testing) of the drywell head and manport primary containment penetrations to be deferred from the current due date of July 17, 1995, until the next refueling outage, which is scheduled to commence on October 13, 1995.

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

Sincerely,

45/

James R. Hall, Senior Project Manager
Project Directorate IV-I
Division of Reactor Projects III/IV
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-298

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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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James R. Hall".

James R. Hall, Senior Project Manager
Project Directorate IV-I
Division of Reactor Projects III/IV
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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Mr. Guy R. Horn
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Cooper Nuclear Station

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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSIONNEBRASKA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICTDOCKET NO. 50-298COOPER NUCLEAR STATIONENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OFNO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering the issuance of an exemption from the requirements of Appendix J to 10 CFR Part 50 to the Nebraska Public Power District (the licensee) for the Cooper Nuclear Station (CNS), located in Nemaha County, Nebraska.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTIdentification of the Proposed Action:

The proposed action would grant an exemption from the requirements of Section III.D.2(a) of Appendix J to 10 CFR Part 50, to allow Type B testing (local leak rate testing) of the drywell head and manport primary containment penetrations to be deferred from the current due date of July 17, 1995, until the next refueling outage, which is scheduled to commence on October 13, 1995.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's request for exemption dated December 27, 1994.

The Need for the Proposed Action:

The proposed action is needed to avoid a plant shutdown solely for the performance of two Type B tests of the subject penetrations. Plant shutdown is undesirable because it subjects the reactor and its supporting systems to transients which increase the potential for malfunctions that may challenge safety systems. Additionally, every shutdown and restart results in radiation

exposure for plant workers as they perform shutdown and restart related tasks in radiation areas in various parts of the plant.

There is no overriding technical need for the Type B tests. The tests are intended to detect local leaks and to measure leakage across each pressure-containing or leakage-limiting boundary for certain reactor containment penetrations, thereby providing assurance that maximum allowable containment leakage rates are not exceeded. Section III.D.2(a) of Appendix J to 10 CFR Part 50 requires that Type B leak rate tests, except for airlocks, be performed during reactor shutdown for refueling, or at other convenient intervals, but in no case at intervals greater than two years. The requested exemption for an extension of the 2-year surveillance interval would allow these penetrations to be tested at the next refueling outage, scheduled to commence on October 13, 1995. The current 2-year interval ends on July 17, 1995, when the plant is expected to be at power. The current operating cycle for CNS commenced on August 1, 1993, and has included an extended, unplanned outage of nearly nine months (May 25, 1994, through February 21, 1995). This factor, along with the anticipated load demand and fuel capacity, has resulted in the rescheduling of the next refueling outage to October 1995.

In its December 27, 1994, exemption request, the licensee cited several factors to demonstrate that a high level of confidence exists that the subject penetrations will still be capable of performing their intended function if the required testing is deferred for a short time. The drywell head and manport penetrations have never failed a Type B local leak rate test in the more than 20 years the plant has been operating; therefore, the potential for any significant degradation of the penetrations during the few months that the

tests would be deferred is extremely low. Although the drywell head seal is made from a silicone rubber compound and environmental conditions such as heat and radiation have been shown to cause degradation in silicone compounds, the current operating cycle will consist of a maximum of 18 months of power operation. Typically, the seal is expected to function for a much longer period, as Appendix J allows up to 2 years of power operation between tests. Finally, gross failure of the penetrations is highly unlikely, as the drywell head and manport penetrations are not active components, and therefore, are not subject to active failure criteria.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action:

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that the proposed exemption is appropriate. The exemption would allow a one-time schedular exemption from Appendix J to 10 CFR Part 50 to allow the Type B testing of two primary containment penetrations to be deferred until the next refueling outage, resulting in approximately three additional months of plant operation beyond the date that those penetrations are currently required to be tested.

The change 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 does involve 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 that there is no measurable environmental impact associated with the proposed action, 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 requested exemption. Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. 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 Statement for the Cooper Nuclear Station, dated February 1973.

Agencies and Persons Consulted:

In accordance with its stated policy, on July 5, 1995, the staff consulted with the Nebraska State official, Ms. Julia Schmidt, Division of Radiological Health, Nebraska Department of Health, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

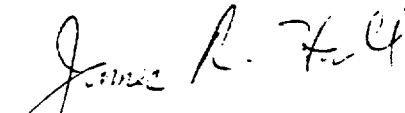
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

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 action, see the licensee's request for exemption dated December 27, 1994, 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 Commission's Local Public Document Room at the Auburn Public Library, 118 15th Street, Auburn, Nebraska 68305.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 10th day of July 1995.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION



James R. Hall, Sr. Project Manager
Project Directorate IV-1
Division of Reactor Projects III/IV
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation