

SEP 28 1984

Docket Nos.: 50-361
and 50-362

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Rosemead, California 91770

Mr. James C. Holcombe
Vice President - Power Supply
San Diego Gas & Electric Company
101 Ash Street
Post Office Box 1831
San Diego, California 92112

Gentlemen:

Subject: Exemption Related to the Criticality Monitoring System
San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station; Unit 2 and 3

In response to your letter dated March 27, 1984, the Commission has issued the enclosed Exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24, Criticality Accident Requirements. The exemption applies to irradiated or unirradiated San Onofre fuel in the fuel handling building, containing uranium enriched to less than 5% in the U-235 isotope. The exemption is issued subject to the restriction that no more than one fuel assembly be outside an approved shipping container, storage rack, or the fuel transfer tube at any time.

We have concluded, based on the considerations discussed in the Exemption, that: (1) there is reasonable assurance that the health and safety of the public will not be endangered by this action, and (2) such activities will not be inimical to the common defense and security or to the health and safety of the public.

The exemption is being forwarded to the Office of the Federal Register for publication. The related Notice of Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact was published in the Federal Register on September 24, 1984. A copy is enclosed for your information.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:
George W. Knighton

George W. Knighton, Chief
Licensing Branch No. 3
Division of Licensing

Enclosures:

1. Exemption
2. Environmental Assessment

cc: See next page

DL:LB#3

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JLee

G.W. Knighton

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San Onofre

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Mr. Joseph O. Ward, Chief
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

In the Matter of)
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY,)
SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY,) Docket Nos. 50-361/362
THE CITY OF ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA AND)
THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA)
(San Onofre Nuclear Generating)
Station, Unit Nos. 2 and 3)

EXEMPTION

I.

The Southern California Edison Company, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, The City of Anaheim, California, and the City of Riverside, California (the licensees) hold Facility License Nos. NPF-10 and NPF-15, which authorize operation of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, Unit Nos. 2 and 3 (the facilities). The licenses provide, among other things, that the facilities are subject to all rules, regulations and Orders of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) now or hereafter in effect. These facilities are pressurized water reactors located in San Diego County, California.

II.

Section (a) of 10 CFR 70.24 requires that each licensee authorized to possess special nuclear material shall maintain in each area where such material is handled, used, or stored, an appropriate criticality monitoring system. Section (a)(1) of 10 CFR 70.24 requires that coverage of all such areas at San Onofre 2 and 3 shall be provided by two criticality detectors.

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By letter dated March 27, 1984, the San Onofre 2 and 3 licensees requested an exemption from this requirement for the San Onofre 2 and 3 new and spent fuel storage areas of the fuel handling building. Specifically, the licensees propose to handle and store both irradiated and unirradiated fuel in the fuel handling building without having the two criticality monitoring systems required by 10 CFR 70.24. Such exemptions may be authorized pursuant to 10 CFR 70.14, provided that the licensees have shown that good cause exists for the exemption. In particular, Revision 1 of Regulatory Guide 8.12 "Criticality Accident Alarm Systems," January 1981, states that it is appropriate to request an exemption from 10 CFR 70.24 if an evaluation determines that a potential for criticality does not exist, as for example where geometric spacing is used to preclude criticality.

The licensees have previously demonstrated that both irradiated and unirradiated fuel will be stored in a geometry which will assure sub-criticality under normal and accident conditions in the new and spent fuel storage areas of the fuel handling building. This is discussed in Sections 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 of the San Onofre 2 and 3 Final Safety Analysis Report. The staff has previously reviewed storage of irradiated and unirradiated fuel in the San Onofre 2 and 3 fuel handling building and has found the licensees' demonstration of subcriticality to be acceptable, as is discussed in Sections 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 of NUREG-0712, the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation Report related to operation of San Onofre 2 and 3, dated February 1981.

The licensees' request for an exemption from 10 CFR 70.24 is based on the use of geometric spacing to preclude criticality in both the new and spent fuel storage areas. We have reviewed the licensee's request and find it

acceptable, provided that geometric subcriticality is assured by prohibiting the licensees from having more than one fuel assembly outside an approved shipping container, storage rack, or the fuel transfer tube at one time.

Although not required by this exemption, we note that the licensees have a single criticality monitoring system in place and operable in the fuel handling building.

Because irradiated or unirradiated fuel will be subcritical due to the use of geometric spacing when stored in the new or spent fuel storage racks, and subject to the restriction that no more than one fuel assembly shall be authorized to be outside an approved shipping container, storage rack or the fuel transfer tube at any time, we conclude that the licensees' request for an exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24 with respect to irradiated or unirradiated fuel in the fuel handling building is acceptable and should be granted.

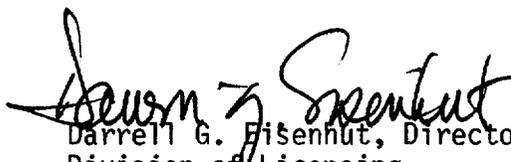
III.

Accordingly, the Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 70.14, an exemption is authorized by law and will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security and is otherwise in the public interest.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the issuance of the exemption will have no significant environmental impact on the environment (49 F. R. 37484).

For further details with respect to this action, see the licensees' request dated March 27, 1984 which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, 1717 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. and at the San Clemente Branch Library, 242 Avenida del Mar, San Clemente, California 92672.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION



Darrell G. Eisenhut, Director
Division of Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Dated at Bethesda, Maryland
this 28th day of September, 1984

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the issuance of the exemption will have no significant environmental impact on the environment (49 F. R. 37484).

For further details with respect to this action, see the licensees' request dated March 27, 1984 which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, 1717 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. and at the San Clemente Branch Library, 242 Avenida del Mar, San Clemente, California 92672.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Darrell G. Eisenhut, Director
Division of Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Dated at Bethesda, Maryland
this 28th day of September, 1984

*See previous concurrence.

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GWKnighton*
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UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY, ET AL.

DOCKET NOS. 50-361 AND 50-362

NOTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (The Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 70.24 to the Southern California Edison Company, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, The City of Anaheim, California, and the City of Riverside, California (the licensees). The licensees hold Facility Operating License Nos. NPF-10 and NPF-15, which authorize operation of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, Unit Nos. 2 and 3 (the facilities). These facilities are pressurized water reactors located in San Diego County, California.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Identification of Proposed Action: The exemption from 10 CFR 70.24 would allow irradiated or unirradiated fuel assemblies to be handled and stored in the San Onofre 2 and 3 fuel handling building without having two criticality monitoring systems operable, provided that no more than one fuel assembly is outside an approved shipping container, storage rack, or fuel transfer tube at any time.

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The Need for the Proposed Action: The proposed exemption is needed to permit refueling operations at San Onofre 2 and 3 to be conducted without installing the criticality detection systems specified by 10 CFR 70.24.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action: There are no environmental impacts of the proposed action. Criticality will be precluded by the use of geometric spacing in storing new and spent fuel storage racks and the restriction that no more than one fuel assembly shall be authorized to be outside an approved shipping container, storage rack or the fuel transfer tube at any one time. This is an acceptable alternative to redundant criticality detection systems. Since the proposed change does not otherwise affect radiological plant effluents nor cause any significant occupational exposures, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with this proposed exemption.

With regard to potential non-radiological impacts, the proposed exemption involves systems located entirely within the restricted area 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 environmental impacts associated with the proposed amendment.

Alternative to the Proposed Action: We have concluded that there is no measurable environmental impact associated with the proposed exemption. The principal alternative would be to deny the requested exemption. This would not reduce environmental impacts of plant operation.

Alternative Use of Resources: This action does not involve the use of resources not previously considered in connection with the "Final Environmental Statement Related to the Proposed San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station Units 2 and 3" dated March 1973, the "Final Environmental Statement Related to the Operation of San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station Units 2 and 3", dated April 1981, and the Errata to the Final Environmental Statement dated June 1981.

Agencies and Persons Consulted: The NRC staff reviewed the licensees' request and did not consult other agencies or persons.

FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

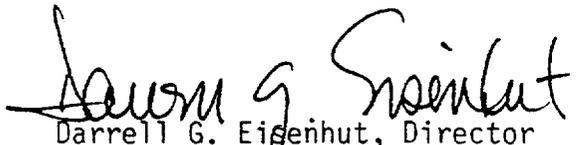
The Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed exemption.

Based upon the foregoing environmental assessment, we conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

For further details with respect to this action, see the request for exemption dated March 27, 1984, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, 1717 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., and at the San Clemente Branch Library, 242 Avenida Del Mar, San Clemente, California 92672.

Dated at Bethesda, Maryland this 17th day of September, 1984.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATOR COMMISSION



Darrell G. Eisenhut, Director
Division of Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

EXEMPTION RELATED TO THE CRITICALITY MONITORING SYSTEM
SAN ONOFRE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION, UNITS 2 AND 3

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~~Docket File~~ 50-361/362

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