June 23, 2008

Vice President, Operations
Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc.
Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station
P.O. Box 250
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Vernon, VT 05354

SUBJECT: VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION - ISSUANCE OF AMENDMENT RE: PRIMARY CONTAINMENT OXYGEN CONCENTRATION AND DRYWELL-TO-SUPPRESSION CHAMBER DIFFERENTIAL PRESSURE LIMITS (TAC NO. MD7055)

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Commission has issued the enclosed Amendment No. 232 to Facility Operating License DPR-28 for the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station, in response to your application dated October 18, 2007.

The amendment would revise the Technical Specifications to change requirements related to primary containment oxygen concentration and drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure limits. The associated actions would also be revised to be consistent with exiting the applicability for each specification.

A copy of the related Safety Evaluation is also enclosed. Notice of Issuance will be included in the Commission's biweekly *Federal Register* notice.

Sincerely,

/RA/

James Kim, Project Manager
Plant Licensing Branch I-1
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-271

Enclosures:
1. Amendment No. 232 to License No. DPR-28
2. Safety Evaluation

cc w/encls: See next page

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station

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June 23, 2008

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Sincerely,

/RA/

James Kim, Project Manager
Plant Licensing Branch I-1
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-271

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2. Safety Evaluation

cc w/encls: See next page

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Technical Specifications:ML1760118 *See memo dated June 2, 2008

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ENTERGY NUCLEAR VERMONT YANKEE, LLC

AND ENTERGY NUCLEAR OPERATIONS, INC.

DOCKET NO. 50-271

VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION

AMENDMENT TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE

Amendment No. 232
License No. DPR-28

1. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) has found that:

   A. The application for amendment filed by Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee, LLC and Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (the licensee) dated October 18, 2007, complies with the standards and requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's rules and regulations set forth in 10 CFR Chapter I;

   B. The facility will operate in conformity with the application, the provisions of the Act, and the rules and regulations of the Commission;

   C. There is reasonable assurance: (i) that the activities authorized by this amendment can be conducted without endangering the health and safety of the public, and (ii) that such activities will be conducted in compliance with the Commission's regulations;

   D. The issuance of this amendment will not be inimical to the common defense and security or to the health and safety of the public; and

   E. The issuance of this amendment is in accordance with 10 CFR Part 51 of the Commission's regulations and all applicable requirements have been satisfied.

2. Accordingly, the license is amended by changes to the Technical Specifications as indicated in the attachment to this license amendment, and paragraph 3.B of Facility Operating License No. DPR-28 is hereby amended to read as follows:

   (B) Technical Specifications

   The Technical Specifications contained in Appendix A, as revised through Amendment No. 232, are hereby incorporated in the license. The licensee shall operate the facility in accordance with the Technical Specifications.

3. This license amendment is effective as of its date of issuance and shall be implemented within 60 days.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

/RA/

Mark Kowal, Chief
Plant Licensing Branch I-1
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Attachment:
Changes to the License and
Technical Specifications

Date of Issuance: June 23, 2008

ATTACHMENT TO LICENSE AMENDMENT NO. 232

FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NO. DPR-28

DOCKET NO. 50-271

Replace the following page of the Facility Operating License with the attached revised page. The revised page is identified by amendment number and contains marginal lines indicating the areas of change.

Remove	Insert
3	3

Replace the following page(s) of the Appendix A Technical Specifications with the attached revised page(s). The revised page(s) are identified by amendment number and contain marginal lines indicating the areas of change.

Remove	Insert
150	150
151	151
152	152

SAFETY EVALUATION BY THE OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION

RELATED TO AMENDMENT NO. 232 TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NO. DPR-28

ENTERGY NUCLEAR VERMONT YANKEE, LLC

AND ENTERGY NUCLEAR OPERATIONS, INC.

VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION

DOCKET NO. 50-271

1.0 INTRODUCTION

By letter dated October 18, 2007 (Agencywide Documents and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML072970340), Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee, LLC and Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc. (the licensee) submitted a request to amend the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (Vermont Yankee) Technical Specifications (TSs). The proposed amendment would revise the TSs to change requirements related to primary containment oxygen concentration and drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure (d/p) limits to allow for enhanced operator flexibility and maintenance activities that are consistent with NUREG-1433, "Standard Technical Specifications – General Electric Plants, BWR/4, Revision 3."

2.0 REGULATORY EVALUATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regulations and review standards such as Appendix A, "General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants," to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), Part 50, include requirements for containment design which consider containment structural integrity and combustible gas control. 10 CFR 50.44(b)(2)(i) requires an inerted atmosphere for all boiling-water reactors (BWR) with Mark I or Mark II type containments, so that during and following an accident (i.e. loss-of-coolant accident (LOCA)) a hydrogen combustion event within the containment cannot occur. Vermont Yankee is a BWR with a Mark I type containment. Inerting is achieved by purging the primary containment with nitrogen until the oxygen concentration is less than 4 percent. Nitrogen is also used to maintain the drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure at ≥ 1.7 pounds per square inch differential (psid). This differential pressure, which keeps the suppression chamber downcomer legs clear of water, is significant in reducing suppression chamber post design basis LOCA hydrodynamic loads. The effect of this pressure differential and reduced downcomer water leg permits the downcomers to clear earlier in the LOCA with resultant lower drywell pressure.

Specific regulatory requirements for containment inerting and differential pressure at Vermont Yankee are found in TS 3.7.A.7 "Oxygen Concentration" and 3.7.A.9 "Drywell/Suppression Chamber d/p". Vermont Yankee TS Section 3.7.A.7.a requires the containment atmosphere to

be less than 4 percent oxygen by volume with nitrogen gas during reactor power operation with coolant pressure above 90 psig. Vermont Yankee TS Section 3.7.A.9.a requires the differential pressure between the drywell and suppression chamber to be maintained ≥ 1.7 psid.

3.0 TECHNICAL EVALUATION

The proposed change to the Vermont Yankee primary containment oxygen concentration and drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure applicability, does not affect the design limits, plant equipment parameters or basic operational considerations for which these TS are required. The proposed changes do affect the time when these TS limits are applicable to allow Vermont Yankee to perform critical inspections and maintenance activities. The current TS already include plant operational flexibility realizing that the probability of an accident during these short periods of time is low and that the plant has vent and purge capabilities while at power operation. This proposed amendment would allow Vermont Yankee to marginally extend this operational flexibility in order to enhance overall plant reliability.

3.1 Current Vermont Yankee TS Requirements

Vermont Yankee TS 3.7.A.7.a requires containment oxygen concentration less than 4 percent with reactor coolant pressure above 90 pounds per square inch gauge (psig). An exception to this requirement is provided during plant startups and shutdowns. Vermont Yankee TS 3.7.A.7.b provides this exception by stating that within the 24-hour period subsequent to placing the reactor in the Run mode following shutdown, the containment oxygen concentration shall be reduced to less than 4 percent and maintained in this condition. In addition, Vermont Yankee TS 3.7.A.7.b allows de-inerting to commence 24 hours prior to a shutdown. The action statement in Vermont Yankee TS 3.7.A.8 requires an orderly shutdown to be initiated and the reactor to be in cold shutdown conditions within 24 hours if TS 3.7.A.7 cannot be met.

Similarly, Vermont Yankee TS 3.7.A.9.a requires the drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure ≥ 1.7 psid. Exceptions to this requirement are allowed during plant startup, plant shutdown and operability testing. TS 3.7.A.9.b allows an exception during startup by requiring the differential pressure to be established within 24 hours of achieving operating pressure and temperature. In addition, TS 3.7.A.9.b also allows the differential pressure to be reduced to less than 1.7 psid 24 hours prior to commencing a cold shutdown. TS 3.7.A.9.c allows the differential pressure to be reduced to less than 1.7 psid for a maximum of 4 hours to facilitate operability testing of components. The action statement in TS 3.7.A.9.d states that if TS 3.7.A.9.a cannot be met, and if the differential pressure cannot be restored within the subsequent six (6) hours, an orderly shutdown of the reactor shall be initiated.

The purpose of these TS restrictions is to prevent primary containment damage, due to a possible ignition of hydrogen. In addition, maintaining a drywell to suppression chamber pressure differential, to keep the suppression chamber downcomer legs clear of water, reduces suppression chamber post design basis loss-of-coolant (LOCA) hydrodynamic loads. The effect of this pressure differential and reduced downcomer water leg permits the downcomers to clear earlier in the LOCA with resultant lower drywell pressure. It also reduces both the downward and upward pressure loads on the suppression chamber.

Following a LOCA combined with a degraded emergency core cooling system (ECCS) response, hydrogen may be produced by the postulated zirconium (fuel cladding) water reaction.

In the presence of sufficient stoichiometric quantities of oxygen, which is produced in small quantities by radiolysis of reactor coolant, a potential ignition of hydrogen could lead to leakage integrity failure of containment. To prevent this from occurring, Vermont Yankee TS require that the containment be maintained with less than 4 percent oxygen concentration to minimize the potential of hydrogen combustion following a LOCA.

The primary containment for Vermont Yankee contains a drywell and connected pressure suppression chamber. The drywell is connected to the suppression chamber by eight circular vent pipes that are then connected to a vent header in the air space of the suppression chamber. Projecting downward from the vent header are 96 downcomer pipes, each 24 inches in diameter, terminating below the water surface in the suppression chamber. The drywell-to-suppression chamber pressure differential is applied to lower the water in the downcomer to reduce the potential dynamic loading on containment and to allow the remaining water level to clear the downcomer faster reducing the potential peak drywell pressure in the event of a LOCA.

3.2 Proposed Changes to the Vermont Yankee TS Requirements

The licensee proposed TS changes to require the containment oxygen concentration and drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure be within limits of 4 percent oxygen and ≥ 1.7 psid within 24 hours of exceeding 15 percent of rated thermal power during startups while in the run mode and to allow these limits to be exceeded up to 24 hours prior to lowering reactor power to less than 15 percent of rated thermal power prior to a plant shutdown. Proposed TS 3.7.A.9 would also state that if oxygen concentration is ≥ 4 percent and cannot be restored within 24 hours, while in the Run mode, then reactor power shall be less than 15 percent rated thermal power within the next 8 hours. Similarly, if the drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure cannot be restored while in the Run mode following 4 hours for maintenance activities allowed by the proposed TS 3.7.A.10.b, then it must be restored within the subsequent 8-hour period or reactor power will be less than 15 percent of rated thermal power within the next 12 hours in accordance with proposed TS 3.7.A.10.c.

The applicability statements in the current TS in regards to primary containment oxygen concentration use inconsistent terminology. TS 3.7.A.7.a defines applicability as “during reactor power operation with reactor coolant pressure above 90 psig” whereas TS 3.7.A.7.b defines applicability in terms of time from “prior to shutdown.” The proposed change relaxes the initiation of the 24-hour period such that it is tied to achieving 15% rated thermal power starting up or shutting down, as applicable, rather than initiating the 24-hour period at the currently required point of entering the Run mode or a reactor shutdown. The licensee has also proposed changes to the conditional action statements associated with these TS changes. Currently, there is no allowed time to restore the primary containment oxygen concentration limit prior to entering the default shutdown action. The licensee has proposed a conditional action statement that allows 24 hours to restore oxygen concentration to within limits followed by a requirement to reduce power to less than 15 percent rated thermal power within the next 8 hours for a total time of 32 hours.

Similarly, the applicability statements in the current TS in regards to drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure use terminology that is subject to interpretation. As stated by the licensee, the first part of TS 3.7.A.9.b defines applicability to “within 24 hours of achieving operating pressure and temperature” and the second part defines applicability in terms of “24 hours prior to commencing a cold shutdown.” These statements leave the licensee to define

what constitutes “operating temperature and pressure” and to selecting a time frame for “commencing a cold shutdown.” The proposed changes revise the initiation of the 24-hour period such that it is tied to achieving 15% rated thermal power when starting up or shutting down, as applicable, rather than the currently required point of achieving operating temperature and pressure or commencing a plant shutdown. The current Vermont Yankee TS 3.7.A.9.c allows 4 hours to perform required operability testing on specified systems. In addition, if Vermont Yankee cannot restore drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure in a subsequent 6-hour period, an orderly shutdown shall be initiated and the reactor shall be in hot shutdown condition in 6 hours and in a cold shutdown condition in the following 18 hours (TS 3.7.A.9.d). As stated above, the licensee has proposed a change that would allow an 8-hour period to restore drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure or would require reactor thermal power to be less than 15 percent rated thermal power within the next 12 hours.

In addition to the changes described, the licensee has made a small number of editorial changes to the format of their containment systems TS Section 3.7. Primarily, the licensee proposed to add a new section to place the conditions required for the drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure requirements (TS Section 3.7.A.10), to facilitate use and application by the operators. Also, the licensee is proposing to delete the sections of the TS where the drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure requirements had existed along with their respective conditional requirements and action statements. Specifically, TS Sections 3.7.A.7.b and 3.7.A.9.b would be deleted and a new TS Section 3.7.A.10.a, b, and c would be created to contain the revised drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure TS requirements.

3.3 Staff Evaluation

The proposed change to the Vermont Yankee TS applicability requirement for TS 3.7.A.7 “Oxygen Concentration” and 3.7.A.10 “Drywell/Suppression Chamber d/p” will not change the current limits for these parameters. The proposed changes clarify the definition of the applicability periods of the TS. As acknowledged by the licensee, the proposed changes would minimally increase the applicability time for when these parameters would not be within limits during plant startup and shutdown. The licensee performs a number of inspections and maintenance activities to safety-related components and systems during plant startup and shutdown that can only be done while the plant is at a low thermal power level. It is important for personnel protection and efficiency to perform these activities with a de-inerted atmosphere. Placing the mode switch to run as soon as practical during startup conditions has the potential benefit to prevent spurious neutron monitoring instrumentation reactor scrams. Basing the applicability of the oxygen concentration and drywell differential pressure TS on 15 percent thermal power level rather than the run mode, the licensee will be able to complete the maintenance activities and inspections required at startup and shutdown without the concern of a spurious reactor scram.

The primary containment is required to be inert at thermal power greater than 15 percent in the run mode, since this is the condition with the highest probability for an event that could produce hydrogen. It is also the condition with the highest probability of an event that could impose large loads on the primary containment.

The additional time, while the containment is not inerted, or the time when the drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure does not meet the differential pressure requirement will not have a significant effect on the risk of plant operations. As long as reactor power is less

than 15 percent rated thermal power, the potential for an event that generates significant hydrogen is low and the primary containment need not be inert. Furthermore, the probability of an event that generates hydrogen within the first 24 hours of a startup, or within the last 24 hours before a shutdown, is low enough to justify the time when containment is not inerted to control oxygen concentration and differential pressure. The 24-hour time period allowed by TS is a reasonable amount of time for plant personnel to perform inerting or de-inerting evolutions.

The drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure can only be controlled when the primary containment is inert. Again, as with the oxygen concentration requirements, the probability of an event within the first 24 hours of a startup, or within the last 24 hours before a shutdown, is low enough to justify the time when drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure is less than 1.7 psid.

These proposed changes are consistent with NUREG-1433, and with TS requirements that have been approved by the NRC staff for other plants. These proposed changes are, therefore, acceptable.

The proposed changes to the action requirements for oxygen concentration will correct a Vermont Yankee TS inconsistency that does not allow a restoration of the oxygen concentration if the TS requirement of less than 4 percent is not met. In the case of the proposed drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure action statements, the licensee has maintained its allowed 4-hour time period to complete operability testing and added to that a restoration time period of 8 hours from the previous 6-hour time and replaced the current shutdown condition within 24 hours to a 12-hour power reduction to 15 percent rated thermal power. The total time allowed for reactor power reduction to 15 percent rated thermal power if the proposed drywell-to-suppression chamber differential pressure action statements are followed is 4 hours greater than the improved standard TS would suggest in NUREG-1433, Section 3.6.2.5 Actions A and B. (combined time for shutdown allowed is 20 hours). However, the licensee's current TS Section 3.7.A.9.c and d allow for as much as 34 hours to be in cold shutdown condition for a differential pressure less than 1.7 psid. Therefore, by adopting portions of the improved standard TS in NUREG-1433, the licensee has reduced its time allowed for a power reduction to less than 15 percent which is a more restrictive change than following the current Vermont Yankee TS. As discussed above, these proposed changes will not have a significant effect on the risk of plant operations and are mostly consistent with NUREG-1433, and with TS requirements that have been approved by the NRC staff for other plants. These proposed changes are, therefore, acceptable.

There were a small number of editorial changes associated with these proposed TS changes. The NRC staff has confirmed that these proposed changes were editorial and, therefore, are acceptable.

4.0 STATE CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Commission's regulations, the Vermont State official was notified of the proposed issuance of the amendment. The State official had no comments.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION

The amendment changes a requirement with respect to installation or use of a facility component located within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20 and changes surveillance requirements. The NRC staff has determined that the amendment involves no significant increase in amounts, and no significant change in the types of any effluents that may be released offsite, and that there is no significant increase in individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. The Commission has previously issued a proposed finding that the amendment involves no significant hazards consideration, and there has been no public comment on such finding (72 FR 71712). Accordingly, the amendment meets the eligibility criteria for categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9). Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the issuance of the amendment.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Commission has concluded, based on the considerations discussed above, that: (1) there is reasonable assurance that the health and safety of the public will not be endangered by operation in the proposed manner, (2) such activities will be conducted in compliance with the Commission's regulations, and (3) the issuance of the amendment will not be inimical to the common defense and security or to the health and safety of the public.

Principal Contributors: B. Lee
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Date: June 23, 2008