



## U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

# STANDARD REVIEW PLAN

### 2.5.1 GEOLOGIC CHARACTERIZATION INFORMATION

#### REVIEW RESPONSIBILITIES

**Primary-** Organization responsible for review of information related to geologic characteristics of the site and environs

**Secondary-** None

#### I. AREAS OF REVIEW

Chapter 2 of the Standard Review Plan (SRP) addresses the review of the site characteristics that could affect the siting and safe design of the plant. The staff reviews information presented by the applicant for an early site permit (ESP), combined license (COL), a construction permit (CP) or an operating license (OL) concerning regional and site geology in their Final Safety Analysis Report (FSAR) or Site Safety Analysis Report for an ESP. The SRP Section 2.5.1 applies to reviews of each of these types of applications.

The applicant investigates geologic characteristics of the site and its environs in sufficient scope and detail to evaluate the suitability of the site for the proposed facility. The

Revision 5 – July 2014

---

#### USNRC STANDARD REVIEW PLAN

This Standard Review Plan (SRP), NUREG-0800, has been prepared to establish criteria that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff responsible for the review of applications to construct and operate nuclear power plants intends to use in evaluating whether an applicant/licensee meets the NRC regulations. The SRP is not a substitute for the NRC regulations, and compliance with it is not required. However, an applicant is required to identify differences between the design features, analytical techniques, and procedural measures proposed for its facility and the SRP acceptance criteria and evaluate how the proposed alternatives to the SRP acceptance criteria provide an acceptable method of complying with the NRC regulations.

The SRP sections are numbered in accordance with corresponding sections in Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.70, "Standard Format and Content of Safety Analysis Reports for Nuclear Power Plants (LWR Edition)." Not all sections of RG 1.70 have a corresponding review plan section. The SRP sections applicable to a combined license application for a new light-water reactor (LWR) are based on RG 1.206, "Combined License Applications for Nuclear Power Plants (LWR Edition)."

These documents are made available to the public as part of the NRC policy to inform the nuclear industry and the general public of regulatory procedures and policies. Individual sections of NUREG-0800 will be revised periodically, as appropriate, to accommodate comments and to reflect new information and experience. Comments may be submitted electronically by e-mail to [NRO\\_SRP@nrc.gov](mailto:NRO_SRP@nrc.gov)

Requests for single copies of SRP sections (which may be reproduced) should be made by e-mail to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555, Attention: Reproduction and Distribution Services Section by fax to (301) 415-2289 by e-mail to [DISTRIBUTION@nrc.gov](mailto:DISTRIBUTION@nrc.gov). Electronic copies of this section are available through the NRC public Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr0800/>, or in the NRC Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> under Accession No. ML13316C067.

---

geologic information collected by the applicant for this evaluation must consider all natural phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and surrounding area, with sufficient margin for the limited accuracy, quantity, and period of time in which the historical data have been accumulated. Results of these investigations are used to determine geologic factors that affect site suitability, design and operation of the proposed facility, and to estimate, in Section 2.5.2, the site-specific ground motion response spectrum (GMRS) and to support the probabilistic seismic hazard analysis (PSHA).

The objective of this SRP section is to enable the staff's review of the results of the investigations and assessments of geologic characteristics that affect the site. Review and acceptance of basic data-gathering processes, investigation results, and completeness of this information as presented by an applicant are integral parts of the review responsibilities defined in this section.

The staff's review, described in this SRP section, focuses on determining the acceptability of applicant's characterization of geologic features that might affect site suitability. The review methods and acceptance criteria developed in this SRP section outline an approach to determine if the results of the geologic investigations are acceptable. An applicant may propose other approaches to demonstrate compliance with applicable regulatory requirements and the staff will review those alternatives. The applicant uses this geologic information in its site suitability analyses (FSAR 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.5.4 and 2.5.5) and staff reviews those analyses and assessments per SRP 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.5.4 and 2.5.5. Because the geologic and tectonic information provided in FSAR Section 2.5.1 directly supports the assessments in FSAR Section 2.5.2 "Vibratory Ground Motion" and Section 2.5.3 "Surface Deformation," the investigations for Section 2.5.1 generally follow the four areas defined in Regulatory Guide (RG) 1.208, using radii of 320 km (200 mi) for the site region, 40 km (25 mi) for the site vicinity, 8 km (5 mi) for the site area, and 1 km (0.6 mi) for the site location. RG 1.208 indicates the need for increasing levels of detail as the investigations progress closer to the proposed site. In addition, per Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) 100.23 (c), "the size of the region to be investigated and the type of data pertinent to the investigations must be determined based on the nature of the region surrounding the proposed site." In some locations, for example, the potential for very large earthquakes or for volcanic activity might require investigations to be performed at greater distances from the site than 320 km (200 mi).

The geological, geophysical, and geotechnical information provided by an applicant in the FSAR addresses the following three specific topics necessary for review of regional geology (Safety Analysis Report (SAR) Section 2.5.1.1) and local geology (SAR Section 2.5.1.2): geologic setting, tectonic framework, and potential hazardous conditions caused by human activities. Explicit consideration of human activities (e.g., impacts of mining, quarrying, slope instability, fluid injection or withdrawal) is necessary because such human activities have the potential to alter some geologic processes that may influence site suitability and might not be preserved in the geologic record.

As part of the review process the staff evaluates the information provided by the applicant with a focus on Quaternary-aged geologic features. The Quaternary period is defined as the geologic period that began approximately 2.6 million years ago (Ma) and continues to the present. Geologic or tectonic features with activity in the Quaternary Period might indicate a potential for future tectonic activity, whereas older tectonic features generally lack such potential. As discussed in RG 1.208, a PSHA characterizes seismic potential through consideration of the historic and geologic record from the Quaternary Period.

Thus, the characterization of potential Quaternary-aged tectonic features is an important part of this review. In addition, the reviewer of FSAR Section 2.5.2 would need to confirm that relevant Quaternary-aged features were considered appropriately in the PSHA.

A PSHA often uses seismic source zones, such as those used in the Central and Eastern United States Seismic Source Characterization (CEUS-SSC) model that integrate tectonic and seismic information from a broad range of sources. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff will need to determine if new geologic information has been developed that affects the technical basis for a source-zone model. The significance of new information must be determined as part of a coordinated review of information in Section 2.5.2.

1. Geologic Setting

The reviewer assesses information related to physiography, stratigraphy, lithology, and geomorphology, tectonic setting, faulting and folding characteristics of the region encompassing the site, and geologic history with special focus on features of Quaternary age.

The reviewer confirms that the application provides adequate information at the site vicinity and area for assessment of local geologic conditions in comparison to the regional geologic topics addressed above as well as potential hazards related to natural phenomena including landslides and other mass-wasting phenomena; displacement along growth faults; glacially-induced deformation; and potential for collapse or subsidence in areas underlain by limestone or other soluble rock (e.g., salt and gypsum).

2. Tectonic Framework

The reviewer assesses information related to the tectonic framework of the region including structural geologic characteristics of the site and the region around the site, geologic and tectonic history; state of stress in the crust; nature and structure of the crust, and tectonic deformation features underlying the site and region, particularly those of Quaternary age, specifically including data on faulting and fault recurrence rates. The reviewer should also assess historical seismicity as it relates to the identification and characterization of geological structures. Seismicity and vibratory ground motion are primary review responsibilities addressed in SRP Section 2.5.2, which includes a detailed review of the seismic record and potential seismic source zones. Close coordination between geologists and seismologists is essential to assure that the tectonic framework developed in FSAR Section 2.5.1 is correctly incorporated into the hazards analyses reviewed in SRP Sections 2.5.2 through 2.5.4.

The reviewer confirms that sufficient information is provided by the applicant to estimate the potential for strong earthquake ground motions and surface deformation at the site. This information includes geologic evidence for Quaternary deformation (i.e., faulting or folding), evidence of prehistoric earthquakes (i.e., paleoliquefaction features), and other features indicative of past seismic activity. The reviewer also confirms that the applicant has addressed the relationship between regional-scale and local-scale features of particular interest. In addition, the reviewer confirms that the applicant has evaluated all geologic phenomena that might affect the design and operation of the proposed facility, irrespective of whether such phenomena are explicitly included in this SRP.

For sites adjacent to large bodies of water, information pertinent to assessing hazards from probable maximum tsunami and seiche shall be provided or cross-referenced to SRP Section 2.4.6. At such sites, the reviewer also confirms that the applicant has considered the potential for earthquakes and tectonic structures located beneath water.

### 3. Conditions Caused by Human Activities

The reviewer assesses information regarding topography, slope stability, fluid injection or withdrawal, mineral extraction, jointing and faulting, solution effects, and seismicity at the site as they might effect, or be effected by, conditions resulting from human activities.

The reviewer confirms that the application includes information on potential for changes in groundwater conditions caused by withdrawal or injection of fluids; subsidence or collapse caused by withdrawal of fluids; issues related to mineral extraction; and induced seismicity and fault movement caused by reservoir impoundment and fluid injection or withdrawal.

The reviewer confirms that information provided by the applicant is documented through appropriate references to relevant published and unpublished materials. Illustrative materials to document site characteristics should include, but are not necessarily limited to, structural, tectonic, physiographic, topographic, geologic, gravity, and magnetic maps; geologic cross-sections showing soil horizons, stratigraphy, lithology, and structure; geologic maps of trenches and test pits; seismic reflection or refraction and other geophysical survey profiles; soil and core boring logs; geophysical borehole logs; aerial photographs; and remote sensing imagery and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR). Some sites might require maps illustrating areas of subsidence, karst features, mechanically weak zones of soil and rock, paleoliquefaction features, irregular weathering conditions and weathering depths, landslide potential, locations of oil and gas wells, faults and joints.

Locations of all proposed facility structures, Seismic Category I facilities, and site boundaries, should be included on data maps. Subsurface data locations, such as borings, trenches, test pits, seismic and geophysical data collection profiles, and geologic cross-sections, should be included on plot plans. The geologic terminology used should conform to that found in standard references.

Considering information derived from the application, other published and unpublished scientific literature, and the reviewer's own technical knowledge, practical experience, and professional judgment, the reviewer assesses adequacy of the geologic information provided in support of the applicant's conclusions concerning site suitability. The staff might also need to conduct an independent literature review at an appropriate level of detail. The reviewer should evaluate all pertinent data, including information that could support alternative interpretations of data or conclusions presented by the applicant.

However, the application and its supporting information should enable the staff to logically progress from data and assumptions to conclusions drawn without the need for an extensive independent literature review.

## Review Interfaces

Other SRP sections interface with this section as follows:

1. SRP Section 2.0, "Site Characteristics and Site Parameters." For COL applications referencing a DC rule, submitted by the applicant is performed under SRP Section 2.0, Site Characteristics and Site Parameters. Review of site characteristics and site-related design parameters in ESP applications or in COL applications referencing an ESP is also performed under Section 2.0.
2. SRP Section 2.4.12, "Groundwater." Review of information pertaining to local and regional groundwater is performed under SRP Section 2.4.12 on Groundwater. For sites adjacent to large bodies of water, information pertinent to assessing potential hazards from probable maximum tsunami and seiche must be provided in this SRP section or cross-referenced to SRP Section 2.4.6.
3. SRP Section 2.5.2, "Vibratory Ground Motion." Review of earthquake sources, wave propagations and site response to determine the GMRS and PSHA is performed under SRP Section 2.5.2 on Vibratory Ground Motion. Information in SRP Section 2.5.1 on the geologic and tectonic setting, including characteristics of Quaternary-aged faults, should be consistent with information used in SRP Section 2.5.2. Particular attention should be given to new information that has the potential to affect seismic source-zones that were developed in prior investigations.
4. SRP Section 2.5.3, "Surface Deformation." Review of information that addresses existence of the potential for surface deformation that could affect the site is performed under SRP Section 2.5.3 on Surface Deformation. Information in SRP Section 2.5.1 on the geologic and tectonic setting, including characteristics of Quaternary-aged faults, should be consistent with information used in SRP Section 2.5.3.
5. SRP Section 2.5.4, "Stability of Subsurface Materials and Foundations." Review of information concerning properties and stability of all soils and rock that may affect plant facilities under both static and dynamic loading conditions, including vibratory ground motions associated with the GRMS, is performed under SRP Section 2.5.4 on Stability of Subsurface Materials and Foundations.
6. SRP Section 2.5.5, "Stability of Slopes." Review of information related to stability of all earth and rock slopes, both natural and man-made, and cuts, fills, embankments, and dams, the failure of which could adversely affect safety of the plant, is performed under SRP Section 2.5.5 on Stability of Slopes.

## II. ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

### Requirements

Acceptance criteria are based on meeting the relevant requirements of the following Commission regulations:

1. Applicable to a COL, CP: 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, General Design Criterion (GDC) 2, "Design Bases for Protection Against Natural Phenomena" as it relates to consideration of the most severe of the natural phenomena that have been historically

reported for the site and surrounding area, with sufficient margin for the limited accuracy, quantity and period of time in which the historical data have been accumulated.

2. Applicable to an ESP: 10 CFR 52.17(a)(1)(vi) "Contents of application, technical information." A site SAR includes the geological characteristics of the proposed site with consideration of the most severe of the natural phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and 10 CFR 52.17(a)(1)(xii), an evaluation of the site against applicable sections of the SRP acceptance criteria.
3. Applicable to a COL: 10 CFR 52.79(a)(iii) "Contents of application, technical information." A site FSAR includes the geological characteristics of the proposed site with consideration of the most severe of the natural phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and the surrounding area and with sufficient margin for the limited accuracy, quantity, and time in which the historical data have been accumulated.
4. Applicable to COL, ESP, CP, OL: 10 CFR 100.23, "Geologic and Seismic Siting Criteria." Subsection (c) of 100.23, requires that the geologic, seismic and engineering characteristics of the site and its environs be investigated in sufficient scope and detail to permit an adequate evaluation of the proposed site; provide sufficient information to support estimates of the Safe Shutdown Earthquake (SSE) ground motion; and permit adequate engineering solutions to actual or potential geologic and seismic effects at the proposed site. 10 CFR 100.23(c) further specifies that all geologic and seismic factors that may affect design and operation of the proposed nuclear power plant must be investigated, irrespective of whether such factors are explicitly included in 10 CFR 100.23(c) (e.g., volcanic activity).

### SRP Acceptance Criteria

Specific SRP acceptance criteria acceptable to meet the relevant requirements of the NRC regulations identified above are as follows for the review described in this SRP section. The SRP is not a substitute for the NRC regulations, and compliance with it is not required. However, an applicant is required to identify differences between the design features, analytical techniques, and procedural measures proposed for its facility and the SRP acceptance criteria and evaluate how the proposed alternatives to the SRP acceptance criteria provide acceptable methods of compliance with the NRC regulations.

Appropriate sections of the following RGs are used by the staff for the identified acceptance criteria:

RG 1.208, "A Performance-Based Approach to Define Site-Specific Earthquake Ground Motion," describes methods acceptable for conducting geologic, geophysical, seismic, and geotechnical investigations.

RG 1.206, "Combined License Applications for Nuclear Power Plants - LWR Edition," discusses guidance for combined license applications for nuclear power plants (LWRs)."

RG 4.7, "General Site Suitability Criteria for Nuclear Power Stations," discusses major site characteristics related to public health and safety which are considered by a reviewer for determining suitability of sites for nuclear power facilities.

The reviewer should confirm that information provided in the application is complete; properly documented; consistent with applicable requirements of 10 CFR 100.23(c); shows that methods described in RG 1.208, or comparable methods, were employed for identifying and characterizing the geologic information as it pertains to consideration of natural hazard phenomena that might affect the site; and conforms to the format suggested in RG 1.206. For evaluating completeness and acceptability of the application, the reviewer should use published and unpublished scientific information derived from various sources that present geologic, geotechnical, seismic, geophysical, and related data for the region in which the site is located. These sources include the United States Geological Survey (USGS); other Federal and State agencies; and academia, industry, and other non-governmental and professional organizations.

The reviewer must ensure that the applicant's investigations are conducted at an appropriate level of thoroughness, with an increasing level of detail progressing from site region to site location as indicated in RG 1.208. The reviewer should confirm that sufficient information is presented in the application to support the site suitability analyses reviewed in SRP Sections 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.5.4, and 2.5.5 that the technical information used in these analyses is consistent with the geologic information reviewed in SRP Section 2.5.1. Site specific features that may not have been captured in the regional PSHA model, reviewed in SRP Section 2.5.2, are of particular concern for the review in this section.

1. Regional Geology (SAR Section 2.5.1.1)

Requirements of GDC 2 in Appendix A of 10 CFR Part 50, 10 CFR 52.17, 10 CFR 52.79 and 10 CFR 100.23 (c) are met and guidance in RGs 1.206, 1.208 and 4.7 followed for this area of review if a complete and documented discussion is presented for the geologic setting, tectonic framework and conditions caused by human activities, that have the potential to affect the safe siting and design of the plant. This section should contain a review of regional stratigraphy, lithology, structural geology, geologic and tectonic history, tectonic features (with emphasis on the Quaternary period), seismology, geomorphology, paleoseismology, and physiography within the 320 km (200 mi) site region or beyond as necessary to provide a framework within which significance to safety can be evaluated concerning geology, seismology, and conditions caused by human activities. Geologic maps and cross-sections constructed at scales adequate to illustrate relevant regional features should be included in the application.

2. Local Geology (SAR Section 2.5.1.2)

Requirements of GDC 2 in Appendix A of 10 CFR Part 50, 10 CFR 52.17, 10 CFR 52.79 and 10 CFR 100.23 (c) are met and guidance in RGs 1.206, 1.208 and 4.7 followed for this area of review if it contains a description and evaluation of geologic features, tectonic features, and conditions caused by human activities at appropriate levels of detail for determining any potential natural hazards that might affect the design and operation of the proposed facility. This subsection should contain the following information:

- a. Structural geology, including identification and characterization of faults, joints, and other tectonic deformation features and discussion of the relationships between these features and regional tectonic structures.
- b. Geologic maps and cross-sections constructed at scales adequate to clearly illustrate pertinent features in the site vicinity, area and location shall be included in the application.

- c. Stratigraphy and lithology of rock units and discussion of their relationships to the regional lithostratigraphic framework.
- d. Geomorphologic features as tectonic strain markers or indicators of other potentially hazardous natural phenomena (e.g., landslides, karst development and dissolution collapse, growth faults).
- e. Geologic and tectonic history, particularly for the Quaternary Period, and discussion of the relationship to regional geologic and tectonic history.
- f. Tectonic framework description, including identification of historical and instrumentally-recorded earthquakes; identification and characterization of any local tectonic features as they might be related to seismicity; discussion of the relationships between local and regional tectonic structures and any relationship to seismicity; and the nature of the crust beneath the site.
- g. Evidence for paleoseismic features, including a description of investigations performed by the applicant to verify the presence or absence of the features.
- h. Geologic features that have significance for geotechnical engineering:
  - (1) Zones of mineralization, alteration, irregular or deep weathering, or structural weakness in surface or subsurface materials.
  - (2) Surface and subsurface dissolution features in soluble rock such as limestone, gypsum, or salt.

### Technical Rationale

The technical rationale for application of these acceptance criteria to the area of review addressed by this SRP section is as follows:

Application of GDC 2, 10 CFR 52.17(a)(1)(vi) for ESP applications, 10 CFR 52.79 (a)(1)(iii) for COLs and 10 CFR 100.23 provides assurance that the most severe geologic and seismic conditions at the chosen plant site have been identified, and that all geologic and seismic factors that might affect the design and operation of the proposed facility have been adequately investigated and characterized.

Application of 10 CFR 100.23(c) requires that the geologic and seismic characteristics of the site and its environs be investigated in sufficient scope and detail to permit an adequate evaluation of the proposed site; provide sufficient information to support estimates of the SSE ground motion; and permit adequate engineering solutions to actual or potential geologic and seismic effects at the proposed site. Further, 10 CFR 100.23(c) specifies that all geologic and seismic factors that might affect design and operation of the proposed nuclear power plant must be investigated.

Application of 10 CFR 100.23(d) requires that the geologic and seismic siting factors considered for design include a determination of the potential for surface tectonic and non-tectonic deformations.



### III. REVIEW PROCEDURES

The procedures outlined below are used to review ESP, CP, OL applications and COL applications that do not reference an ESP to determine whether geologic and seismic information for the proposed site meets the Subsection II, 'Acceptance Criteria' of this SRP section. As applicable, reviews of COLs include a determination on whether the content of technical specifications related to continued seismic surveillance is acceptable and whether the technical specifications reflect consideration of any unique geologic and seismic conditions that have been identified. For deviations from these acceptance criteria, the staff should review the applicant's evaluation of how the proposed alternatives provide an acceptable method of complying with the relevant NRC requirements identified in Subsection II, 'Acceptance Criteria.'

#### Review Process

During the regulatory review process, the reviewer follows specific regulatory requirements promulgated in the *Code of Federal Regulations*, the regulatory guidance and the acceptance criteria in this SRP. The review process, with staff's responsibilities described within each step, is applied for ESP, COL, and CP applications.

#### 1. Acceptance Review

The acceptance review is a brief, high level review of the application to evaluate its completeness and identify safety issues that could cause delays in subsequent phases of the review process. Acceptance or rejection of the application for detailed review of application, is governed by the provision of adequate information and documentation, as described in the requirements of GDC 2 in Appendix A of 10 CFR Part 50, 10 CFR 52.17(a)(1)(vi), 10 CFR 52.79(a)(iii), and 10 CFR 100.23(c) and in RGs 1.206, and 1.208, to enable an independent staff review of conclusions presented by the applicant. An application that has sufficient information for staff to begin the review is acceptable for docketing.

#### 2. Detailed Review of Application

After the application is docketed, the staff conducts a thorough, detailed technical review of material in the application and identifies all potential safety issues. The reviewer confirms that all interpretations in the application are based on generally accepted geologic practices and are supported by appropriate data and models. The reviewer confirms that alternative data sets, if available, are appropriately considered in development of the applicant's assessment and conclusions. The reviewer also considers any significant new information derived from site-specific geologic, seismic, geophysical, and geotechnical investigations that have not been considered or applied to tectonic and ground motion models used in the PSHA. Appendix C of RG 1.208 describes acceptable methods for addressing significant new information in the PSHA Literature Review.

The staff proceeds with a literature search and review of relevant references (e.g., published geologic reports, USGS professional papers and open-file reports, university theses, physiographic and geologic maps, and aeromagnetic and gravity maps) to acquire additional pertinent information on regional and local geology and seismology.

However, as publication of data and results commonly lags behind completion of research projects and excavation investigations, a reviewer does not rely entirely on information submitted by the applicant or that in published literature. The reviewer identifies any pertinent studies underway in the site region and obtains information on preliminary results of these studies. Some of these studies or other data may be proprietary in nature and should be handled accordingly. The reviewer gives particular attention to models or data that have the potential to introduce alternative interpretations to the models or data in the application, which might affect conclusions for safety or suitability of the site.

#### Development of Requests for Additional Information

During the detailed technical review, staff develops requests for additional information (RAIs) related to issues considered to be inadequately addressed in the application and that might affect conclusions for safety or suitability of the site. If insufficient data are provided in the application to support interpretations and conclusions presented, the staff will request the applicant to provide additional clarifying information. Questions might arise from discovery of references not cited by the applicant that suggest alternative interpretations to the information and interpretations provided by the applicant. The RAIs might indicate the need to conduct additional investigations. The detailed review schedule will commonly include public meetings with the applicant to ask clarifying questions and allow the applicant to present new data or other information to justify conclusions in the application. Staff reviews the applicant's responses to questions and remaining issues may be resolved by supplemental RAIs, public meetings or by staff positions. A staff position is usually in the form of a requirement for the applicant to provide confirmatory information or to design for a specific condition in a manner deemed to be adequate under and consistent with the requirements of 10 CFR 100.23.

#### Site Audit and Confirmatory Activities

Staff conducts site audits to examine geologic features revealed by outcrops, trenches, test pits, surface and subsurface geophysical tests, and borehole data. The audit typically covers review topics for both SRP Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.3, therefore staff will focus on evaluating geologic features within the site vicinity, area and location that may indicate any natural hazard to the site and surface deformation. Staff prepares a site audit report to document observations and to aid in the development of the Safety Evaluation Report (SER). The report is subsequently submitted to NRC Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) and retained as a record.

As part of confirmatory activities for the site audit review, staff might conduct an independent geologic reconnaissance of the site region, vicinity, area, and location as necessary to examine soil and rock samples from core borings and test pits and geologic features in trenches and excavations for other facilities.

### 3. Review of Supplemental Information

The final phase for resolving all open safety-related issues is associated with the staff review of the applicant's responses to RAIs. If the RAI response does not adequately answer the staff's concern, staff typically will develop supplemental RAIs and request a meeting with the applicant to discuss the technical details of the remaining issues

regarding site suitability and the safe operation of the proposed facility. When safety issues have been resolved, the staff then prepares the Final Safety Evaluation Report (FSER).

#### 4. Geologic Mapping License Condition

Under the COL, or ESP approach defined in 10 CFR Part 52, a license or permit might have already been granted to an applicant before safety-related excavations are opened and geologic mapping of the excavations begun. Thus, new geologic features might be discovered in plant excavations, which have the potential to affect staff's understanding of site safety. To ensure that the safety implications of new information are reviewed, clear statements must be provided in the site-specific portion of the COL application that the applicant commits to:

- (1) Perform detailed geologic mapping of the excavations for safety-related structures;
- (2) Examine and evaluate geologic features discovered in excavations for safety-related structures; and
- (3) Notify the NRC once excavations for safety-related structures are open for inspection by NRC staff.

Staff propose a geologic mapping license condition in the SER for each COL site where plant excavations and geologic mapping have not been completed prior to a license being granted. Likewise, a geologic mapping permit condition will be proposed in the SER for each ESP site. For those COL or ESP sites where plant excavations and geologic mapping take place prior to a COL or ESP being granted, staff will evaluate the plant excavations and mapping as part of the application review.

#### Review Considerations Specific to ESPs and COLs

##### 1. Early Site Permit Reviews

10 CFR Part 52, Subpart A specifies the requirements and procedures applicable to the Commission's review of an ESP application for approval of a proposed site. Information required in an ESP application includes description of geologic, seismic, geophysical, geotechnical, and hydrologic characteristics of the proposed site. The applicant should propose geologic site characteristics that will form a set of values for design and construction of a new plant to be built at the site.

At the COL stage, in the absence of certain circumstances, such as a compliance or adequate protection issue, 10 CFR 52.39 "Finality of Early Site Permit Determinations," precludes the staff from imposing new site characteristics, design parameters, or terms and conditions on the ESP. Accordingly, the reviewer for SRP Section 2.5.1 should ensure that all geologic site characteristics that could affect the design basis of safety-related structures, systems and components are reflected in the site characteristics, design parameters, or terms and conditions of the ESP. Nevertheless, this requirement does not relieve the applicant or permit holder from the requirements of 10 CFR 52.6(b), which state that the NRC must be notified about any new information having a significant implication for public health and safety or common defense and security that might be developed following issuance of an ESP.

In order to verify that no geologic features or conditions exist beneath the safety-related structures at the site that could compromise plant safety, the staff proposes a permit condition requiring an applicant to: (1) perform detailed geologic mapping of the excavations for nuclear island structures; (2) examine and evaluate geologic features discovered in excavations for safety-related structures other than those for the nuclear island; and (3) notify the NRC once excavations for safety-related structures are open for inspection by NRC staff.

## 2. Combined License Reviews

NRC staff reviews a COL application referencing a certified standard design to determine that sufficient information is presented to demonstrate that the characteristics of the site fall within the DC site parameters rule.

NRC staff reviews a COL application referencing an ESP application to determine that sufficient information is presented to demonstrate that the design of the facility falls within the site characteristics and design parameters specified in the ESP as applicable to this SRP section. In accordance with 10 CFR 52.79(b)(2), if the design of the facility does not fall within the site characteristics and design parameters, the application shall include a request for a variance from the ESP that complies with the requirements of 10 CFR 52.39 and 10 CFR 52.93.

In the absence of certain circumstances, such as a compliance or adequate protection issue, 10 CFR 52.39, "Finality of early site permit determinations," precludes the staff from imposing new site characteristics, design parameters, or terms and conditions on the ESP at the COL stage. Consequently, a COL application referencing an ESP need not include a re-investigation of the site characteristics that have previously been accepted in the referenced ESP. However, long-term environmental changes and changes to the region resulting from human activities or natural causes might introduce changes to the site characteristics that are relevant to the design basis. Therefore, in accordance with 10 CFR 52.6, "Completeness and Accuracy of Information," the applicant or licensee is responsible for identifying changes, of which it is aware, that would satisfy the criteria specified in 10 CFR 52.39.

Information provided by the applicant in accordance with 10 CFR 52.6(b) will be addressed by the staff during the review of a COL application referencing an ESP or a DC.

For a COL application referencing either an ESP or DC or both, the staff should review the corresponding sections of the ESP and DC FSER to ensure that any ESP conditions, restrictions to the DC, or COL action items identified in the FSERs are appropriately handled in the COL application.

## IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The review should document the staff's evaluation of geologic site characteristics concerning the relevant regulatory criteria. The evaluation should support the staff's conclusions regarding whether the regulations are met. The reviewer should state what was done to evaluate the applicant's SAR. Depending on the content of the application, the staff's evaluation might include verification that the applicant followed applicable regulatory guidance, performance of independent calculations, and confirmation of appropriate assumptions. The reviewer may state that certain information provided by the applicant was not considered significant to staff's

understanding of safety and, consequently, was not reviewed in detail. Although the reviewer may summarize or quote the information offered by the applicant in support of the application, the reviewer should clearly articulate the bases for staff's conclusions regarding compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.

#### 1. Early Site Permit Reviews

A typical staff finding at the conclusion of the review can be illustrated as follows.

The staff has considered information about the geologic characterization of the site and site suitability provided by the applicant in support of the license application. The information reviewed includes data from regional and local investigations; geologic reconnaissance of the site vicinity and area; the staff's independent review of pertinent published literature; and discussions with knowledgeable scientists at the USGS, State Geological Surveys, universities, consulting firms, or other non-governmental and professional organizations.

Based on the staff review:

The geologic, geophysical investigations and information provided by the applicant as required by 10 CFR 52.17 and 10 CFR 100.23 have been combined with the staff's independent review of the data and other information sources. The staff concludes that the applicant has investigated the geological characteristics of the site and its environs in sufficient scope and detail to permit an adequate evaluation of the proposed site, as required by 10 CFR 100.23(c). Staff concludes that the size of the region investigated is appropriate for the geologic setting of the proposed site, and that all geologic factors that might affect the design and operation of the proposed facility have been investigated.

Staff concludes that the applicant has acceptably characterized the most severe of the geologic phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and surrounding area, and has provided sufficient margin in this characterization to account for the limited accuracy, quantity, and period of time in which the historical data have been accumulated, as required by 10 CFR 52.17(a)(1)(vi).

In order to verify that no geologic features or conditions exist beneath the safety-related structures at the site that could affect the design and operation of the facility, the staff proposes a license condition requiring an applicant to: (1) perform detailed geologic mapping of the excavations for nuclear island structures; (2) examine and evaluate geologic features discovered in excavations for safety-related structures other than those for the nuclear island; and (3) notify the NRC once excavations for safety-related structures are open for inspection by NRC staff.

#### 2. Combined License, Construction Permit, Operating License Reviews

A typical staff finding at the conclusion of a review for a COL that does not reference a previous ESP can be illustrated as follows.

The staff has considered information about the geologic characterization of the site and site suitability provided by the applicant in support of the license application. The information reviewed includes data from regional and local investigations; geologic reconnaissance of the site vicinity and area; the staff's independent review of pertinent

published literature; and discussions with knowledgeable scientists at the USGS, State Geological Surveys, universities, consulting firms, or other non-governmental and professional organizations.

Based on the staff review:

The geologic, geophysical investigations and information provided by the applicant as required by 10 CFR 52.79(a)(iii), 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, GDC 2 and 10 CFR 100.23 have been combined with the staff's independent review of the data and other information sources. The staff concludes that the applicant has investigated the geological characteristics of the site and its environs in sufficient scope and detail to permit an adequate evaluation of the proposed site, as required by 10 CFR 100.23(c). Staff concludes that the size of the region investigated is appropriate for the geologic setting of the proposed site, and that all geologic factors that might affect the design and operation of the proposed facility have been investigated.

Staff concludes that the applicant has acceptably characterized the most severe of the geologic phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and surrounding area, and has provided sufficient margin in this characterization to account for the limited accuracy, quantity, and period of time in which the historical data have been accumulated, as required by 10 CFR 52.79(a)(iii). This characterization is acceptable as a design basis for protection against natural phenomena, as required by 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, GDC 2(1).

In order to verify that no geologic features or conditions exist beneath the safety-related structures at the site that could affect the design and operation of the facility, the staff proposes a license condition requiring an applicant to: (1) perform detailed geologic mapping of the excavations for safety-related structures; (2) examine and evaluate geologic features discovered in excavations for safety-related structures; and (3) notify the NRC once excavations for safety-related structures are open for inspection by NRC staff.

For COL applications that do not reference a previous ESP, staff evaluation findings will include the evaluation findings identified above for ESP reviews. For a COL referencing a previous ESP, staff should refer to the previous ESP and include an evaluation of any new pertinent information that might have been discovered after the ESP was issued that affects the design and operability of the proposed facility. For a CP application, findings will be similar to the ESP findings. For an OL application, findings will include evaluation of excavations for safety-related structures.

For COL reviews, the findings will also summarize the staff's evaluation of requirements and restrictions (e.g., interface requirements and site parameters) and COL action items relevant to this SRP section.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION

The staff will use this SRP section in performing safety evaluations of ESP, COL, CP, and OL applications submitted by applicants pursuant to 10 CFR 100.23, 10 CFR Part 52 or 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, and GDC 2, as applicable. The staff will use the method described herein to evaluate conformance with Commission regulations. If the applicant proposes an alternative method for complying with specified portions of the Commission's regulations, the applicant must demonstrate the acceptability of its alternate method in meeting those regulations.

The guidance of this SRP section has been accepted as an alternative method for complying with 10 CFR 52.47(a)(9), "Contents of applications; technical information," which states, in part, that the application must contain an evaluation of the standard plant design against the SRP revision in effect 6 months before the docket date of the application.

VI. REFERENCES

1. 10 CFR 100.23, "Geologic and Seismic," of 10 CFR Part 100, "Reactor Site Criteria."
2. 10 CFR Part 52.
3. Divisions of Geologic Time-Major Chronostratigraphic and Geochronologic Units, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey, Fact Sheet 2010-3059, July 2010.
4. EPRI, "Central and Eastern United States Seismic Source Characterization for Nuclear Facilities," EPRI, Palo Alto, CA, U.S. Department of Energy, and U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC, NUREG-2115, 2012.
5. GDC 2, "Design Bases for Protection Against Natural Phenomena," in Appendix A, (General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants) to 10 CFR Part 50, "Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities."
6. K.K.E. Neuendorf, J.P. Mehl, Jr., and J. A. Jackson, Editors, "Glossary of Geology," Fifth Edition (revised), American Geosciences Institute, Alexandria, Virginia, 2011.
7. RG 1.208, "A Performance-Based Approach to Define Site-Specific Earthquake Ground Motion," U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC.
8. RG 1.206, "Combined License Applications for Nuclear Power Plants (LWR Edition)," U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC.
9. RG 4.7, "General Site Suitability Criteria for Nuclear Power Stations," U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC.

---

**PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT**

The information collections contained in the Standard Review Plan are covered by the requirements of 10 CFR Part 50, 10 CFR Part 52, and 10 CFR Part 100, and were approved by the Office of Management and Budget, approval numbers 3150-0011, 3150-0151, and 3150-0093.

**PUBLIC PROTECTION NOTIFICATION**

The NRC may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a request for information or an information collection requirement unless the requesting document displays a currently valid OMB control number.

---



## **SRP Section 2.5.1 Description of Changes**

### **Section 2.5.1 “Geologic Characterization Information”**

This SRP section affirms the technical accuracy and adequacy of the guidance previously provided in Revision 4, March 2007 of this SRP (ADAMS Accession No. ML070730464). Changes include consideration of the geologic characteristics of the site and region including consideration of the most severe of natural phenomena that have been historically reported for the site and region in order to evaluate the suitability of the site for the proposed facility. The technical changes incorporated in current revision include the following:

In general and throughout; updated text with editorial and clarifying statements and changed the title of the SRP as shown above. Specific changes include the following:

#### **I. AREAS OF REVIEW**

- a. Clarified the link to 10 CFR 100.23(c) and removed Appendix A language
- b. Clarified and strengthened review interfaces especially with respect to SRP Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3
- c. Clarified the emphasis on Quaternary aged features
- d. Removed outdated EPRI references, added NUREG 2115
- e. Removed review of PSHA assessment, inserted review emphasis on geologic information in support of SRP Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 hazard assessments.

#### **II. ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA**

- a. Enhanced and clarified the link to 10 CFR 100.23 (c), 10 CFR 52.17, 10 CFR 52.79, and GDC 2.
- b. Removed RG 1.132, 1.138, 1.165, 1.198

#### **III. REVIEW PROCEDURES**

- a. Modified the review process steps based on lessons learned from recent reviews
- b. Added information regarding Site Safety Audits and RAI development based on lessons learned from recent reviews.
- c. Added specific detail concerning the Geologic Mapping License Condition

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

Clarified and updated findings based on applicable regulations 10 CFR 100.23(c), 52.17, 52.79 and Part 50 GDC 2

V. IMPLEMENTATION

Clarified and updated text according to recommendation by Division of Advanced Reactors and Rulemaking

VI. REFERENCES

a. Removed the following references:

- i. RG 1.165
- ii. TR-102293 R.G. 1.132
- iii. RG 1.138
- iv. RG 1.198
- v. UCRL-ID-115111
- vi. NUREG-1488
- vii. NP-4726A
- viii. EPRI Report

b. Added the following documents:

NUREG-2115

c. Updated the following references:

Geologic Time Scale, US Geological Survey, Fact Sheet 2010-3059  
Glossary of Geology