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NRC Agrees to Changes in Crystal River Nuclear Plant's Emergency Programs

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has granted Duke Energy Florida's request to alter the emergency preparedness plan for the Crystal River Unit 3 nuclear power plant in Crystal River, Fla., to reflect the plant's decommissioning status.

The changes come in the form of exemptions from certain requirements in NRC's regulations for operating nuclear power plants that may not be appropriate for a plant that has permanently ceased operations. Once the exemptions are implemented, state and local governments may rely on comprehensive emergency management ("all hazard") planning for off-site emergency response to events at Crystal River, rather than having a dedicated radiological emergency response plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As a result, there will not be a 10-mile emergency planning zone identified in the license for Crystal River Unit 3. The plant will maintain an onsite emergency plan and response capabilities, including the continued notification of local government officials for an emergency declaration.

The NRC staff agreed with Duke's analyses that the exemptions are warranted because the risk of an offsite radiological release is significantly lower and the types of possible accidents significantly fewer at a nuclear power reactor that has permanently ceased operations and removed fuel from the reactor vessel than at an operating power reactor. Based on the NRC staff's evaluation and recommendation, [the Commission approved](#) the exemptions Dec. 30. The exemption package, including a safety evaluation report, was issued March 30. A license amendment implementing the exemptions was issued March 31.

Crystal River Unit 3 is a single pressurized water reactor within the Crystal River Energy Complex located in Citrus County, Florida. The plant has been safely shutdown since Sept. 26, 2009. All fuel has been removed from the reactor vessel and placed in the spent fuel pools for storage as of May 28, 2011. On Feb. 20, 2013, Duke certified to the NRC that Crystal River Unit 3 had permanently shut down and the fuel had been permanently removed from the reactor vessel. The exemptions for emergency preparedness requirements are part of several changes to the plant's licensing basis and technical specifications to reflect Crystal River Unit 3's decommissioning status.