

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 52-025 and 52-026; NRC-2008-0252]

**Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc.,
Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 3 and 4
Containment Hydrogen Igniter Changes**

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Exemption and combined license amendment; issuance.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is granting an exemption to allow a departure from the certification information of Tier 1 of the generic design control document (DCD) and is issuing License Amendment No. 61 to Combined Licenses (COLs), NPF-91 and NPF-92. The COLs were issued to Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., and Georgia Power Company, Oglethorpe Power Corporation, MEAG Power SPVM, LLC, MEAG Power SPVJ, LLC, MEAG Power SPVP, LLC, Authority of Georgia, and the City of Dalton, Georgia (the licensee); for construction and operation of the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP) Units 3 and 4, located in Burke County, Georgia.

The granting of the exemption allows the changes to Tier 1 information asked for in the amendment. Because the acceptability of the exemption was determined in part by the acceptability of the amendment, the exemption and amendment are being issued concurrently.

DATES: The exemption and amendment were issued on December 22, 2016.

ADDRESSES: Please refer to Docket ID **NRC-2008-0252** when contacting the NRC about the availability of information regarding this document. You may obtain publicly-available information related to this document using any of the following methods:

- **Federal Rulemaking Web site:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket ID **NRC-2008-0252**. Address questions about NRC dockets to Carol Gallagher; telephone: 301-415-3463; e-mail: Carol.Gallagher@nrc.gov. For technical questions, contact the individual listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section of this document.

- **NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS):** You may obtain publicly-available documents online in the ADAMS Public Documents collection at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. To begin the search, select "[ADAMS Public Documents](#)" and then select "[Begin Web-based ADAMS Search](#)." For problems with ADAMS, please contact the NRC's Public Document Room (PDR) reference staff at 1-800-397-4209, 301-415-4737, or by e-mail to pdr.resource@nrc.gov. The ADAMS accession number for each document referenced (if it is available in ADAMS) is provided the first time that it is mentioned in this document. The request for the amendment and exemption was submitted by letter dated February 6, 2015 (ADAMS Accession No. ML15037A715), as supplemented by letter dated September 15, 2015 (ADAMS Accession No. ML15258A555).

- **NRC's PDR:** You may examine and purchase copies of public documents at the NRC's PDR, Room O1-F21, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chandu Patel, Office of New Reactors, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001; telephone: 301-415-3025; e-mail: Chandu.Patel@nrc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction

The NRC is granting an exemption from Paragraph B of section III, "Scope and Contents," of appendix D, "Design Certification Rule for the AP1000," to part 52 of title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), and issuing License Amendment No. 61 to COLs, NPF-91 and NPF-92, to the licensee. The exemption is required by Paragraph A.4 of Section VIII, "Processes for Changes and Departures," appendix D, to 10 CFR part 52 to allow the licensee to depart from Tier 1 information. With the requested amendment, the licensee sought proposed changes to the VEGP Units 3 and 4 Updated Final Safety Analysis Report (UFSAR) in the form of departures from the incorporated plant-specific DCD Tier 2 information. The proposed amendment also involves related changes to plant-specific Tier 1 information, with corresponding changes to the associated COL Appendix C information.

The amendment authorizes changes to the VEGP Units 3 and 4 UFSAR: (1) to add two additional hydrogen igniters to the in-containment refueling water storage tank roof vents; (2) to remove control of the hydrogen igniters from the protection and safety monitoring system; (3) to clarify the controls available for the hydrogen igniters at the remote shutdown workstation; and (4) to make changes to the design aspects of the hydrogen igniters to maintain consistency within various licensing documents. Part of the justification for granting the exemption was provided by the review of the amendment. Because the exemption is necessary in order to issue the requested license amendment, the NRC granted the exemption and issued the amendment concurrently, rather than in sequence. This included issuing a combined safety evaluation containing the NRC staff's review of both the exemption request and the license amendment. The exemption met all applicable regulatory criteria set forth in 10 CFR 50.12, 10 CFR 52.7, and Section VIII.A.4 of appendix D to 10 CFR part 52. The license amendment

was found to be acceptable as well. The combined safety evaluation is available in ADAMS under Accession No. ML16096A449.

Identical exemption documents (except for referenced unit numbers and license numbers) were issued to the licensee for VEGP Units 3 and 4 (COLs NPF-91 and NPF-92). The exemption documents for VEGP Units 3 and 4 can be found in ADAMS under Accession Nos. ML16096A431 and ML16096A433, respectively. The exemption is reproduced (with the exception of abbreviated titles and additional citations) in Section II of this document. The amendment documents for COLs NPF-91 and NPF-92 are available in ADAMS under Accession Nos. ML16096A424 and ML16096A427, respectively. A summary of the amendment documents is provided in Section III of this document.

II. Exemption

Reproduced below is the exemption document issued to VEGP Units 3 and Unit 4. It makes reference to the combined safety evaluation that provides the reasoning for the findings made by the NRC (and listed under Item 1) in order to grant the exemption:

1. In a letter dated February 6, 2015, and supplemented by letter dated September 15, 2015, the licensee requested from the Commission an exemption to allow departures from Tier 1 information in the certified DCD incorporated by reference in 10 CFR part 52, appendix D, as part of license amendment request 15-003, "Containment Hydrogen Igniter Changes."

For the reasons set forth in Section 3.1 of the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation, which can be found in ADAMS under Accession No. ML16096A449, the Commission finds that:

A. the exemption is authorized by law;

- B. the exemption presents no undue risk to public health and safety;
- C. the exemption is consistent with the common defense and security;
- D. special circumstances are present in that the application of the rule in this circumstance is not necessary to serve the underlying purpose of the rule;
- E. the special circumstances outweigh any decrease in safety that may result from the reduction in standardization caused by the exemption; and
- F. the exemption will not result in a significant decrease in the level of safety otherwise provided by the design.

2. Accordingly, the licensee is granted an exemption from the certified DCD Tier 1 information related to hydrogen igniter, as described in the licensee's request dated February 6, 2015, and supplemented by letter dated September 15, 2015. This exemption is related to, and necessary for the granting of License Amendment No. 61, which is being issued concurrently with this exemption.

3. As explained in Section 5.0 of the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation (ADAMS Accession No. ML16096A449), this exemption meets the eligibility criteria for categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9). Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment needs to be prepared in connection with the issuance of the exemption.

4. This exemption is effective as of the date of its issuance.

III. License Amendment Request

By letter dated February 6, 2015 (ADAMS Accession No. ML15037A715), as supplemented by letter dated September 15, 2015 (ADAMS Accession No. ML15258A555), the licensee requested that the NRC amend the COLs for VEGP, Units 3 and 4, COLs NPF-91 and NPF-92. The proposed amendment is described in Section I of this document.

The Commission has determined for these amendments that the application complies with the standards and requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's rules and regulations. The Commission has made appropriate findings as required by the Act and the Commission's rules and regulations in 10 CFR chapter I, which are set forth in the license amendment.

A notice of consideration of issuance of amendment to facility operating license or COL, as applicable, proposed no significant hazards consideration determination, and opportunity for a hearing in connection with these actions, was published in the *Federal Register* on March 2, 2016 (81 FR 10920). Comments were received during the 30-day comment period.

IV. Public Comments

A request for a hearing was filed on May 2, 2016, by the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League ("BREDL") and its chapter, Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff (ADAMS Accession No. ML16124B062). The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) denied BREDL's request for hearing in an order dated September 16, 2016 (ADAMS Accession No. ML16259A157). Subsequently, on October 11, 2016, BREDL appealed the ASLB decision (ADAMS Accession No. ML16285A548). On February 16, 2017, the Commission affirmed the ASLB's decision (ADAMS Accession No. ML17047A149).

Under its regulations, the Commission may issue and make an amendment immediately effective, notwithstanding the pendency before it of a request for a hearing from any person, in

advance of the holding and completion of any required hearing, where it has made a final determination that no significant hazards consideration is involved.

The Commission has determined that these amendments satisfy the criteria for categorical exclusion in accordance with 10 CFR 51.22. Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared for these amendments.

V. Conclusion

Using the reasons set forth in the combined safety evaluation, the staff granted the exemption and issued the amendment that the licensee requested on February 6, 2015, and supplemented by letter dated September 15, 2015. The exemption and amendment were issued on December 22, 2016, as part of a combined package to the licensee (ADAMS Accession No. ML16096A345).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 13th day of March 2017.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

/RA/

Jennifer Dixon-Herrity, Chief,
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