

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;

**Clarification of ASME Code Section III Compliance and Alternative Requirements
for ASME Section III Pressure Tests Conducted Following the Completion of
ASME Section III Construction Activities**

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 departures from the certification information of Tier 1 of the generic design control document (DCD) and is issuing License Amendment Nos. 157 and 155 to Combined Licenses (COL), NPF-91 and NPF-92, respectively. 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, and the City of Dalton, Georgia (collectively SNC); 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 requested 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 April 9, 2019.

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 Website:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket ID **NRC-2008-0252**. Address questions about NRC docket IDs to Jennifer Borges; telephone: 301-287-9127; e-mail: Jennifer.Borges@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 "[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 November 29, 2018, and available in ADAMS under Accession No. ML18333A337.

- **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: Donald Habib, Office of New Reactors, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001; telephone: 301-415-1035; e-mail: Donald.Habib@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 Nos. 157 and 155 to COLs, NPF-91 and NPF-92, to SNC. 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 SNC to depart from Tier 1 information. With the requested amendment, SNC sought proposed changes that would revise plant-specific Tier 1 information with corresponding changes to the associated COL Appendix C information. Specifically, the amendment proposes changes to plant-specific Tier 1 (and COL Appendix C) Section 1.2, "General Provisions," to clarify that when the Design Commitment or Inspections, Tests, Analyses, and Acceptance Criteria provides that an item or activity must comply with American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Code Section III, this means compliance with the ASME Section III Code, as incorporated by reference in 10 CFR 50.55a with specific conditions, or in accordance with alternatives authorized by the NRC pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a.

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. The NRC also concurrently authorized SNC to use an alternative to the requirements of ASME Section III, NB-6221(a), NC-6221(a), ND-6221(a), NB-6321(a), NC-6321(a), and ND-6321(a) of the ASME Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code, 1998 Edition through the 2000 Addenda (Code of Record) for

VEGP Units 3 and 4. The proposed request for alternative is applicable to pressure testing following repair and/or replacement activities that occur following the completion of all ASME Section III construction activities and application of the ASME certification marking. Issuance of the exemption, amendment, and alternative included issuing a combined safety evaluation containing the NRC staff's review of the exemption request, license amendment, and alternative. The exemption met all applicable regulatory criteria set forth in §§ 50.12, 52.7, and section VIII.A.4 of appendix D to 10 CFR part 52. The license amendment and alternative were found to be acceptable as well. The combined safety evaluation is available in ADAMS under Accession No. ML19018A138.

Identical exemption documents (except for referenced unit numbers and license numbers) were issued to SNC 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. ML19018A136 and ML19018A137, 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. ML19018A132 and ML19018A134, 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 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 November 29, 2018, SNC 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 (LAR) 18-031, "Clarification of ASME Code Section III Compliance and Alternative Requirements for ASME Section III Pressure Tests Conducted Following the Completion of ASME Section III Construction Activities."

For the reasons set forth in Section 3.2 of the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation, which can be found in ADAMS under Accession No. ML19018A138, 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, SNC is granted an exemption from the certified DCD Tier 1 information, with corresponding changes to Appendix C of the Facility Combined License, as described in SNC's request dated November 29, 2018. This exemption is

related to, and necessary for the granting of License Amendment No. 157 [for Unit 3, 155 for Unit 4], 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. ML19018A138), 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 November 29, 2018 (ADAMS Accession No. ML18333A337), SNC 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 *Federal Register* notice.

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 January 30, 2019 (84 FR 496). No comments were received during the 30-day comment period.

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.

IV. Conclusion

Using the reasons set forth in the combined safety evaluation, the staff granted the exemptions and issued the amendments that SNC requested on November 29, 2018. The exemption and amendment were issued on April 9, 2019, as part of a combined package to SNC (ADAMS Accession No. ML19018A130).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 24th day of April, 2019.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

/RA/

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