



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

April 16, 2020

Mrs. Maria L. Lacal  
Executive Vice President/  
Chief Nuclear Officer  
Mail Station 7602  
Arizona Public Service Company  
P.O. Box 52034  
Phoenix, AZ 85072-2034

SUBJECT: PALO VERDE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION, UNITS 1, 2, AND 3 –  
EXEMPTION FROM SELECT REQUIREMENTS OF 10 CFR PART 26  
(EPID L-2020-LLE-0024 [COVID-19])

Dear Mrs. Lacal:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has approved the requested exemption from specific requirements of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 26, "Fitness for Duty Programs," Section 26.205, "Work hours." This action is in response to your application dated April 14, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML20105A481), which cited the March 28, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20087P237), letter from Mr. Ho Nieh describing a process to request expedited review of certain exemptions from 10 CFR Part 26 during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE).

In your letter, you provided the following information:

- A statement that you can no longer meet the work-hour controls of 10 CFR 26.205(d) for certain positions;
- A list of positions for which you will maintain current work-hour controls under 10 CFR 26.205(d)(1)-(d)(7);
- The date and time when you will begin implementing site-specific COVID-19 PHE fatigue-management controls for personnel specified in 10 CFR 26.4(a);
- A statement that your site-specific COVID-19 fatigue-management controls are consistent with the constraints outlined in the March 28, 2020, letter; and
- A statement that you have established alternative controls for the management of fatigue during the period of the exemption and, at a minimum, the controls ensure that, for individuals subject to these alternative controls:

- Individuals will not work more than 16 work hours in any 24-hour period and not more than 86 work hours in any 7-day period, excluding shift turnover;
- A minimum 10-hour break is provided between successive work periods;
- 12-hour shifts are limited to not more than 14 consecutive days;
- A minimum of 6 days off are provided in any 30-day period; and
- Requirements have been established for behavioral observation and self-declaration during the period of the exemption.

Therefore, the NRC finds that the technical basis for an exemption described in the March 28, 2020, letter is applicable to your specific request.

Section 26.9, "Specific exemptions," allows the NRC to grant exemptions from the requirements of 10 CFR Part 26. The NRC staff has determined that granting the licensee's requested exemption is authorized by law, will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security, and is otherwise in the public interest.

The underlying purpose of 10 CFR 26.205(d) is to prevent impairment from fatigue due to duration, frequency, or sequestering of successive shifts. Based on the evaluation provided in the NRC's March 28, 2020, letter and the criteria discussed above, no new accident precursors are created by utilizing whatever licensee staff resources may be necessary or available during the term of this exemption to respond to a plant emergency and to ensure that the plant maintains a safe and secure status. Therefore, the probability of postulated accidents is not increased. Also, the consequences of postulated accidents are not increased because there is no change in the types of accidents previously evaluated. The requested exemption would allow the utilization of licensee staff resources as may be necessary to maintain safe operation of the plant and to respond to a plant emergency. Therefore, the NRC finds that there is no undue risk to public health and safety from granting the requested exemption.

The requested exemption would allow the utilization of licensee security staff resources as may be necessary to ensure the common defense and security. Therefore, the NRC finds that there is no impact on common defense and security from granting the requested exemption.

Due to the impacts that the COVID-19 PHE has had on the licensee's ability to comply with the work hour controls of 10 CFR 26.205(d), the importance of maintaining the operations of the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, Units 1, 2, and 3 and the controls the licensee has established, the NRC finds that granting the requested exemption is in the public interest.

NRC approval of this exemption request is categorically excluded under 10 CFR 51.22(c)(25)(vi)(I), and there are no extraordinary circumstances present that would preclude reliance on this exclusion. The NRC staff has determined that approval of this exemption involves no significant hazards consideration; no significant change in the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite; no significant increase in individual or cumulative public or occupational radiation exposure; no significant construction impact; and no significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents. In addition, the NRC staff has determined that there would be no significant impacts to biota, water resources, historic properties, cultural resources, or socioeconomic conditions in the region. As such, there are no extraordinary circumstances present that would preclude reliance on this categorical exclusion. Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the approval of this exemption.

Based on the above, the NRC staff finds that (1) the exemption is authorized by law, (2) the exemption will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security, and (3) the exemption is otherwise in the public interest.

This exemption is effective until 12:00 a.m. June 15, 2020.

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Craig G. Erlanger, Director  
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. STN 50-528, STN 50-529,  
STN 50-530, and 72-44

cc: Listserv

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**ADAMS Accession No. ML20107F835****\*via e-mail**

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