



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

July 2, 2020

Mr. Robert Horton, Reactor Administrator  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Denver Federal Center  
P.O. Box 25046, MS 911  
Denver, CO 80225-0046

SUBJECT: U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY – ACCEPTANCE OF THE APPLICATION FOR A LICENSE AMENDMENT RE: EXCEPTION TO TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS 3.1.3 AND 4.1 TO ALLOW FEWER THAN 110 FUEL ELEMENTS WHEN EITHER SHUTDOWN OR OPERATING AT A POWER LEVEL NOT GREATER THAN 5 KILOWATTS (EPID L-2020-LLA-0110)

Dear Mr. Horton:

By letter dated June 4, 2020, as supplemented by letter dated June 25, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System Accession Nos.: ML20161A127 and ML20177A610, respectively), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) staff applied for an amendment to Facility Operating License No. R-113 for the USGS TRIGA Research Reactor. The license amendment request (LAR) proposes to amend technical specification (TS) 3.1.3, "Core Configuration Limitations," and TS 4.1, "Reactor Core Parameters," to provide an exception to allow fewer than 110 fuel elements in the reactor core when either the reactor is shutdown or operating at a power level not greater than 5 kilowatts. In addition, USGS staff proposed to reformat the USGS TSs by standardizing the indentation and line spacing after paragraphs. Consistent with Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) 50.90, "Application for amendment of license, construction permit, or early site permit," an application to amend the license (including the TSs) must fully describe the changes desired and follow, as far as applicable, the form prescribed for original applications. The requirements in 10 CFR 50.34, "Contents of applications; technical information," cover the technical information to be included in the application and stipulate that it addresses design and operating characteristics, unusual or novel design features, and principal safety considerations.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff performed an acceptance review of the LAR and concluded that it includes sufficient information for the NRC staff to begin its detailed technical review. Notwithstanding the acceptance review, the NRC staff may require additional information to complete the detailed technical review. If needed, the NRC staff will request this information by separate correspondence within approximately 180 days of the date of this letter.

Based on the acceptance review, the NRC staff expects to complete its review and make a final determination on the LAR by June 4, 2022. This date could change due to several factors, including requests for additional information, unanticipated changes to the scope of the review, unsolicited supplements to the LAR, and others. If the forecasted date changes, the NRC staff will notify you in writing of the new date and provide an explanation of the reason for the change.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 415-0893, or by electronic mail at [Geoffrey.Wertz@nrc.gov](mailto:Geoffrey.Wertz@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,

*/RA/*

Geoffrey A. Wertz, Project Manager  
Non-Power Production and Utilization Facility  
Licensing Branch  
Division of Advanced Reactors and Non-Power  
Production and Utilization Facilities  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-274  
License No. R-113

cc: See next page

U.S. Geological Survey

Docket No. 50-274

cc:

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Test, Research and Training  
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**ADAMS Accession No.: ML20183A162**                      **\*concurred via e-mail**                      **NRR-106**

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