



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

November 2, 2020

Mr. Robert T. Simril
Site Vice President
Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC
Catawba Nuclear Station
4800 Concord Road
York, SC 29745

SUBJECT: CATAWBA NUCLEAR STATION, UNIT 1 AND 2 – TEMPORARY EXEMPTION FROM CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS OF 10 CFR PART 73, APPENDIX B, “GENERAL CRITERIA FOR SECURITY PERSONNEL,” SECTION VI (EPID L-2020-LLE-0158 [COVID-19])

Dear Mr. Simril:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or the Commission) has approved the below temporary exemption from specific requirements of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, “Nuclear Power Reactor Training and Qualification Plan for Personnel Performing Security Program Duties,” for the Catawba Nuclear Station, Unit Nos. 1 and 2 (Catawba). This action is in response to the Duke Energy (Duke or the licensee) application dated October 5, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML20279A149), as supplemented by letter dated October 22, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20296A474 (both letters non-public, withheld under 10 CFR 2.390)), that requested a temporary exemption from 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(I)(1), regarding the annual licensee conducted force-on-force (FOF) exercises.

The requirements in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(I)(1) state, in part:

Each member of each shift who is assigned duties and responsibilities required to implement the safeguards contingency plan and licensee protective strategy participates in at least one . . . (1) force-on-force exercise on an annual basis. Force-on-force exercises conducted to satisfy the NRC triennial evaluation requirement can be used to satisfy the annual force-on-force requirement for the personnel that participate in the capacity of the security response organization.

The purpose of the annual licensee conducted FOF exercise is to ensure that the site security force maintains its contingency response readiness. Participation in the exercises also supports the requalification of security force members.

On January 31, 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE) for the United States. Subsequently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued recommendations (e.g., social distancing, limiting assemblies) to limit the spread of COVID-19.

In its letter dated October 5, 2020, the licensee stated:

- This temporary exemption supports the isolation restrictions (e.g., social distancing, group size limitations, self-quarantining, etc.) necessary to protect required site personnel in response to the COVID-19 virus. These restrictions are needed to ensure personnel are isolated from the COVID-19 virus and remain capable of maintaining plant security.
- Duke implemented proactive isolation activity restrictions for site personnel on March 16, 2020.
- Duke has continued to conduct the following training requalification requirements of Section VI of Appendix B to Part 73, (e.g., quarterly tactical response drills, tabletop drills, timeline drills, limited-scope tactical drills; annual firearms familiarization; annual daylight qualification course; annual night fire qualification course; annual tactical qualification course; on-the-job training such as annual tasking on critical tasks; annual physical examination; annual physical fitness test; weapons range activity (4-month periodicity); and annual written exam).
- Duke will maintain a list of the names of the individuals who will not meet the requalification requirements and will include the dates of the last qualification.
- Duke will ensure contingency response readiness of security personnel not participating in an annual FOF exercise by continuing to conduct quarterly tactical response drills, including scenario-based table-top exercises.
- Duke will begin implementing its site-specific COVID-19 PHE controls for managing personnel performing Security Program duties at 0000 hours Eastern Standard Time (EST) on November 3, 2020.

In its supplement letter dated October 22, 2020, the licensee stated:

- The FOF annual exercise will be completed by December 31, 2020.

This temporary exemption is specific to security personnel who have previously demonstrated proficiency and are currently qualified in accordance with the requirements in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI. Duke stated that because of the rigorous nature of Catawba security personnel training programs, which consist of regularly scheduled training activities to include weapons training, contingency response drills and exercises, and demonstrated acceptable performance of day-to-day job activities (e.g., detection and assessment, patrols, searches, and defensive operations), it is reasonable to conclude that security personnel will continue to maintain their proficiency, even though the requalification periodicity is temporarily exceeded. Additionally, the October 5, 2020 request stated that the site-specific COVID-19 PHE controls listed above will be implemented at Catawba consistent with the NRC staff's letter published on April 20, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20105A483). Duke requested that the duration of the temporary exemption be in effect until December 31, 2020, consistent with the NRC staff's April 20, 2020, letter.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 73.5, "Specific exemptions," the Commission may, upon application by any interested person or upon its own initiative, grant exemptions from the requirements of

10 CFR Part 73 when the exemptions are authorized by law, will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security, and are otherwise in the public interest.

In accordance with 10 CFR 73.5, the Commission may grant an exemption from the regulations in 10 CFR Part 73 that is authorized by law. The NRC staff has reviewed the exemption request and finds that granting the proposed exemption will not result in a violation of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, or other laws. Therefore, the NRC staff finds that the exemption is authorized by law.

In accordance with 10 CFR 73.5, the Commission may grant an exemption from the regulations in 10 CFR Part 73 when the exemption will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security. This exemption will only apply to licensee security personnel who are already satisfactorily qualified on the security requirements in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, as well as completing the FOF exercise within the time period in this request. Based on this fact, and its review of the controls Duke will implement for the duration of the exemption, including continuing to conduct required quarterly tactical response drills and the other required security training in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, the NRC staff has reasonable assurance that the security force at Catawba will maintain its proficiency and readiness to implement the licensee's protective strategy and adequately protect the site. Therefore, the NRC staff concludes that the proposed exemption would not endanger life or property or the common defense and security.

In accordance with 10 CFR 73.5, the Commission may grant an exemption from the regulations in 10 CFR Part 73 when the exemption is in the public interest. Participation in annual FOF exercises places site security personnel in close proximity to one another. Such proximity has the potential to increase the likelihood of security personnel being exposed to the COVID-19 virus. The NRC staff finds that the temporary exemption from the annual FOF requirement in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(l)(1), would facilitate the licensee's efforts to maintain a healthy workforce capable of operating the plant safely and implementing the site's protective strategy by isolating security personnel from potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The NRC staff concludes that granting the temporary exemption is in the public interest because it allows the licensee to maintain the required security posture at Catawba, while enabling the facility to continue to provide electrical power to the Nation.

Environmental Considerations

NRC approval of this exemption request is categorically excluded under 10 CFR 51.22(c)(25), and there are no special circumstances present that would preclude reliance on this exclusion. The NRC staff determined, per 10 CFR 51.22(c)(25)(vi)(E), that the requirements from which the exemptions are sought involve education, training, experience, qualification, requalification, or other employment suitability requirements. The NRC staff also determined that approval of this exemption request involves no significant hazards consideration because it does not authorize any physical changes to the facility or any of its safety systems, nor does it change any of the assumptions or limits used in the facility licensee's safety analyses or introduce any new failure modes. There is no significant change in the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite because these exemptions do not affect any effluent release limits as provided in the facility licensee's technical specifications or by the regulations in 10 CFR Part 20, "Standards for protection against radiation." There is no significant increase in individual or cumulative public or occupational radiation exposure because these exemptions do not affect limits on the release of radioactive material or the limits provided in 10 CFR Part 20 for radiation exposure to workers or members

of the public. There is no significant construction impact because these exemptions do not involve any changes to a construction permit and no significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents because these exemptions do not alter any of the assumptions or limits in the facility licensee's safety analysis. In addition, the NRC staff determined that there would be no significant impacts to biota, water resources, historic properties, cultural resources, or socioeconomic conditions in the region. 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 request.

Conclusions

The NRC has determined that pursuant to 10 CFR 73.5, the exemption is authorized by law, will not endanger life or property or the common defense and security, and is otherwise in the public interest. Therefore, the Commission hereby grants the licensee's request to temporarily exempt Catawba from the requirement for the annual FOF exercise in subsection C.3.(l)(1) of 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI. This exemption expires on December 31, 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact the Catawba project manager, Karen Cotton, at 301-415-1438 or karen.cotton@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

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

Docket Nos. 50-413 and 50-414

cc: Listserv

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