



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

December 15, 2020

Mr. James Barstow
Vice President, Nuclear Regulatory
Affairs and Support Services
Tennessee Valley Authority
1101 Market Street, LP 4A-C
Chattanooga, TN 37402-2801

SUBJECT: BROWNS FERRY NUCLEAR PLANT, UNITS 1, 2, AND 3 – EXEMPTION FROM ANNUAL FORCE-ON-FORCE EXERCISE REQUIREMENT OF 10 CFR PART 73, APPENDIX B, “GENERAL CRITERIA FOR SECURITY PERSONNEL,” SUBSECTION VI.C.3(I)(1) (EPID L-2020-LLE-0233 [COVID-19])

Dear Mr. Barstow:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC, the Commission) has approved the requested exemption from a specific requirement 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 Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant, Units 1, 2, and 3 (Browns Ferry), for calendar year (CY) 2020. This action is in response to the Tennessee Valley Authority’s (the licensee’s) application dated December 8, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML20343A214), that requested an exemption from 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(I)(1), regarding the annual force-on-force (FOF) exercises for CY 2020 at Browns Ferry.

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 exercises is to ensure that the site security force maintains its contingency response readiness. Participation in these 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. On July 6, 2020, (ADAMS Accession No. ML20175A198), the NRC granted the licensee’s previous request for temporary exemption from 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(I)(1). That

exemption is set to expire on December 31, 2020. As such, the licensee is required to conduct any missed annual licensee-conducted FOF exercises by December 31, 2020.

The licensee's application dated December 8, 2020, stated the following:

- The PHE has not ended and continues to affect Browns Ferry's ability to conduct annual FOF exercises. Current data show an increasing trend in COVID-19 positives in the county where Browns Ferry is located.
- The licensee evaluated each Browns Ferry security position to identify appropriate COVID-19 personnel protection measures to maximize the controls necessary to minimize the potential spread of the virus. These evaluations determined that annual FOF exercises cannot be conducted due to the limited space available for most security positions to allow for appropriate social distancing, while taking into consideration maintaining safety and site security requirements, and then introducing necessary exercise control measures. Support needs from outside the site (i.e., staff needed from other sites in the licensee's fleet) to conduct exercises are not available due to travel restrictions.
- Approval of this exemption will continue to support the isolation protocols necessary to protect essential site personnel. These restrictions are necessary to ensure personnel are isolated from the COVID-19 disease and remain capable of maintaining plant security.
- Impacted security personnel continue to maintain proficiency with the knowledge, skills and abilities required to effectively implement the protective strategy to protect the station against the design basis threat as described in 10 CFR 73.1, Purpose and Scope, because Browns Ferry has continued to conduct the following training/qualification requirements of Section VI. of Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 73:
 - Annual firearms familiarization
 - Annual daylight qualification course
 - Annual night fire qualification course
 - Annual tactical qualification course
 - Annual physical examination
 - Annual physical fitness test
 - Weapons range activity (4-month periodicity)
 - Annual written exam
- In addition, and in accordance with the approved temporary exemption, Browns Ferry conducted tactical response drills, including tabletop exercises with all impacted security personnel.

This exemption is specific to CY 2020 and Browns Ferry security personnel who have previously demonstrated proficiency and are currently qualified in accordance with the requirements of 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI. The licensee stated that because of the rigorous nature of Browns Ferry 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

Browns Ferry security personnel will continue to maintain their proficiency, even though the requalification periodicity is exceeded for CY 2020. The licensee also stated that the proposed exemption does not change Browns Ferry's physical security plans or the defensive strategy and security personnel are monitored regularly by supervisory personnel. Additionally, the December 8, 2020, request identified the site-specific actions listed above that will continue to occur at Browns Ferry to maintain contingency response readiness, consistent with the NRC staff's October 13, 2020, letter (ADAMS Accession No. ML20273A117).

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 in accordance with the security requirements outlined in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI. Based on this fact, and its review of the controls that the licensee will implement for the duration of the exemption, including continuing to conduct quarterly tactical response drills and other security requalification requirements, the NRC staff has reasonable assurance that the security force at Browns Ferry 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. The NRC staff finds that the exemption from the annual FOF exercise requirement in 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(I)(1), for CY 2020 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 exemption for CY 2020 is in the public interest because it allows the licensee to maintain the required security posture at Browns Ferry, 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 exemption is 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 this exemption does 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 this exemption does not affect limits on the release of any 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 this exemption does not involve any changes to a construction permit; and no significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents because this exemption does 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

Accordingly, 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 NRC hereby grants the licensee's request to exempt Browns Ferry from the annual FOF exercise requalification requirement of security personnel in subsection C.3.(l)(1) of 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI. This exemption applies only to those FOF exercises required during CY 2020.

If you have any questions, please contact the Browns Ferry project manager, Michael Wentzel, at 301-415-6459 or michael.wentzel@nrc.gov.

Sincerely,

Caroline L. Carusone, Deputy Director
Division of Operating Reactor Licensing
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-259, 50-260, and 50-296

cc: Listserv

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ADAMS Accession No.: ML20343A363

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