



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

December 17, 2020

Mr. James M. Welsch  
Senior Vice President, Generation  
and Chief Nuclear Officer  
Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant  
P.O. Box 56, Mail Code 104/6  
Avila Beach, CA 93424

SUBJECT: DIABLO CANYON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2 – 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-0166 [COVID-19])

Dear Mr. Welsch:

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 the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, Units 1 and 2 (Diablo Canyon), for calendar year (CY) 2020. This action is in response to Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s (the licensee) application dated October 14, 2020, as supplemented on December 3, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession Nos. ML20288A256 and ML20338A536, respectively (non-public, withheld under 10 CFR 2.390)), 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 Diablo Canyon.

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 June 24, 2020

(ADAMS Accession No. ML20170A319), the NRC granted the licensee's previous request for temporary exemption from 10 CFR Part 73, Appendix B, Section VI, subsection C.3.(l)(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 October 14, 2020, states the following:

- The PHE has not ended and continues to impact Diablo Canyon's ability to conduct annual FOF exercises.
- Approval of this exemption will continue to support the isolation protocols necessary to protect essential site personnel. These restrictions are needed to ensure personnel are isolated from the COVID-19 virus 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 the licensee has continued to conduct the following training requalification requirements of Section VI of Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 73 at Diablo Canyon:
  - Quarterly tactical response drills (tabletop drills)
  - Annual firearms familiarization
  - Annual daylight qualification course
  - Annual night fire qualification course
  - Annual Critical Task Performance Evaluations
  - Annual physical examination
  - Annual physical fitness test
  - Weapons range activity (4-month periodicity)
  - Annual written exam
- In addition, and in accordance with the June 24, 2020, approved temporary exemption, Diablo Canyon conducted scenario-based tabletop exercises with security personnel not participating in an annual FOF exercise.

In its December 3, 2020, response to the NRC staff's request for additional information (ADAMS Accession No. ML20338A536 (non-public, withheld under 10 CFR 2.390)), the licensee stated the following:

- The COVID-19 infection rates in San Luis Obispo County have recently risen significantly, resulting in the highest infection rates since County COVID-19 monitoring began. These high rates have placed San Luis Obispo County in the State's highest infection rate category: purple (widespread). The resulting State and County COVID-19 restrictions are expected to remain in place through the end of CY 2020 and are necessary to help ensure Diablo Canyon security personnel remain healthy and response ready.
- Diablo Canyon will not be able to complete its CY 2020 annual FOF exercises prior to December 31, 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions in effect as required by the State of California and San Luis Obispo County, the county in which Diablo Canyon resides.

With these restrictions in place, it is not possible to safely adhere to established FOF exercise conduct requirements due to the following site-specific conditions:

- Diablo Canyon has multiple tower defensive positions that are not large enough to allow for on-duty officers, players, and controllers while still maintaining the State and local social distancing restrictions.
- Diablo Canyon has several responder holding areas that are not large enough to allow for on-duty officers, players, and controllers while still maintaining the State and local social distancing restrictions.
- Diablo Canyon has several response positions that are not large enough to allow for players and controllers while still maintaining the State and local social distancing restrictions.
- The Diablo Canyon Alarm Stations are not large enough to allow for on-duty officers, players, and controllers while still maintaining the State and local social distancing restrictions.
- To ensure the safe execution of FOF exercises, player controllers must necessarily be in close contact with assigned players in order to take immediate actions to prevent unsafe acts if necessary. This close contact violates the State and local social distancing restrictions.

This exemption is specific to CY 2020 and Diablo Canyon 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 the proposed exemption does not change Diablo Canyon's physical security plans or the defensive strategy; 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 because Diablo Canyon has continued to conduct other security training requalification requirements; and security personnel will continue to be monitored regularly by supervisory personnel and have implemented controls as identified in the approved temporary exemption. Therefore, granting the requested exemption will not endanger or compromise the common defense or security or safeguarding of Diablo Canyon. Additionally, the October 14, 2020, request identified the site-specific actions listed above that continue to occur at Diablo Canyon 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 on 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. Based on this fact, and its review of the controls that the licensee has or will implement to ensure contingency response readiness 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 Diablo Canyon 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.(l)(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 Diablo Canyon, 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 this 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 Diablo Canyon 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 Diablo Canyon project manager, Samson Lee, at 301-415-3168 or [Samson.Lee@nrc.gov](mailto:Samson.Lee@nrc.gov).

Sincerely,

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

Docket Nos. 50-275 and 50-323

cc: Listserv

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**ADAMS Accession No.: ML20346A024**

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NAME	JMaltese	JDixon-Herrity	CErlanger
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