

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

PP&L, INC.

DOCKET NO. 50-388

NOTICE OF CONSIDERATION OF ISSUANCE OF AMENDMENT TO  
FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE, PROPOSED NO SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS  
CONSIDERATION DETERMINATION, AND OPPORTUNITY FOR A HEARING

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an amendment to Facility Operating License No. NPF-22, issued to PP&L, Inc. (the licensee), for operation of the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (SSES), Unit 2, located in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.

The proposed amendment would revise Technical Specification (TS) surveillance requirement (SR) 3.6.1.1.1, which specifies requirements for containment leakage rate testing. Specifically, the proposed amendment would permit deferral of testing of flange o-rings on primary containment penetration spectacle flanges 2S299A and 2S299B until the Unit 2 10th refueling outage, scheduled for spring 2001 or a prior Unit 2 outage requiring entry into Mode 4.

Exigent circumstances exist which cause the Commission to act promptly upon the proposed amendment request. The licensee identified on April 7, 2000, that the previous leakage rate test of spectacle flange o-rings on 2S299A and 2S299B may not have been valid. The licensee requested in a letter and telephone call on April 8, 2000, that the Commission grant enforcement discretion to permit continued plant operation until a TS change request could be processed. The licensee stated that a third o-ring erroneously installed in a channel of the flange intended to facilitate leakage rate testing may restrict the ability to adequately test the pressure retaining ability of the spectacle flange to pipe flange interface. The licensee

stated that the presence of the third o-ring does not affect the pressure retaining ability of the spectacle flange to pipe flange interface. During the phone call, and in a subsequent letter dated April 10, 2000, the Commission noted its intention to exercise enforcement discretion for the period of time necessary to process a license amendment to change the TSs . Guidance provided in NRC Administrative Letter 95-05, Revision 1, "Revisions to Staff Guidance for Implementing NRC Policy on Notices of Enforcement Discretion," dated February 19, 1999, states that a written request for a notice of enforcement discretion should be followed within 48 hours by a request for an exigent license amendment. Thus, the licensee's application for amendment, dated April 10, 2000, is in response to the invalid leakage rate test of the spectacle flange o-rings and to the Commission's actions in granting enforcement discretion.

Before issuance of the proposed license amendment, the Commission will have made findings required by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act) and the Commission's regulations.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 50.91(a)(6) for amendments to be granted under exigent circumstances, the NRC staff must determine that the amendment request involves no significant hazards consideration. Under the Commission's regulations in 10 CFR 50.92, this means that operation of the facility in accordance with the proposed amendment would not (1) involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated; or (2) create the possibility of a new or different kind of accident from any accident previously evaluated; or (3) involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety. As required by 10 CFR 50.91(a), the licensee has provided its analysis of the issue of no significant hazards consideration, which is presented below:

This proposal does not involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated.

The presence of the third o-ring does not degrade and may improve the pressure retaining capability of the pipe flange to spectacle flange interface. The leakage

through the subject lines is not adversely affected by the existence of the third o-ring; therefore the probability of any accident previously evaluated is not significantly increased. The o-rings are passive components and have no active safety function. Similarly, the potential consequences of an accident previously evaluated are not significantly increased by the existence of the third o-ring, since the pressure retaining capability of the pipe flange to spectacle flange interface is not degraded.

This proposal does not create the possibility of a new or different type of accident from any previously evaluated.

Since the pressure retaining capability of the pipe flange to spectacle flange interface is not affected by the existence of the third o-ring as discussed above, the proposed change does not create a new or different type of accident from any previously evaluated.

This change does not involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety.

Since the pressure retaining capability of the pipe flange to spectacle flange interface is not affected by the existence of the third o-ring, the proposed change does not involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety.

The NRC staff has reviewed the licensee's analysis and, based on this review, it appears that the three standards of 10 CFR 50.92(c) are satisfied. Therefore, the NRC staff proposes to determine that the amendment request involves no significant hazards consideration.

The Commission is seeking public comments on this proposed determination. Any comments received within 14 days after the date of publication of this notice will be considered in making any final determination.

Normally, the Commission will not issue the amendment until the expiration of the 14-day notice period. However, should circumstances change during the notice period, such that failure to act in a timely way would result, for example, in derating or shutdown of the facility, the Commission may issue the license amendment before the expiration of the 14-day notice period, provided that its final determination is that the amendment involves no significant hazards consideration. The final determination will consider all public and State comments received. Should the Commission take this action, it will publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER a

notice of issuance. The Commission expects that the need to take this action will occur very infrequently.

Written comments may be submitted by mail to the Chief, Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, and should cite the publication date and page number of this FEDERAL REGISTER notice. Written comments may also be delivered to Room 6D59, Two White Flint North, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Federal workdays. Copies of written comments received may be examined at the NRC Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC.

The filing of requests for hearing and petitions for leave to intervene is discussed below.

By May 5, 2000, the licensee may file a request for a hearing with respect to issuance of the amendment to the subject facility operating license and any person whose interest may be affected by this proceeding and who wishes to participate as a party in the proceeding must file a written request for a hearing and a petition for leave to intervene. Requests for a hearing and a petition for leave to intervene shall be filed in accordance with the Commission's "Rules of Practice for Domestic Licensing Proceedings" in 10 CFR Part 2. Interested persons should consult a current copy of 10 CFR 2.714 which is available at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and accessible electronically through the ADAMS Public Electronic Reading Room link at the NRC Web site (<http://www.nrc.gov>). If a request for a hearing or petition for leave to intervene is filed by the above date, the Commission or an Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, designated by the Commission or by the Chairman of the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Panel, will rule on the request and/or petition; and the Secretary or the designated Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will issue a notice of hearing or an appropriate order.

As required by 10 CFR 2.714, a petition for leave to intervene shall set forth with particularity the interest of the petitioner in the proceeding, and how that interest may be affected by the results of the proceeding. The petition should specifically explain the reasons why intervention should be permitted with particular reference to the following factors: (1) the nature of the petitioner's right under the Act to be made a party to the proceeding; (2) the nature and extent of the petitioner's property, financial, or other interest in the proceeding; and (3) the possible effect of any order which may be entered in the proceeding on the petitioner's interest. The petition should also identify the specific aspect(s) of the subject matter of the proceeding as to which petitioner wishes to intervene. Any person who has filed a petition for leave to intervene or who has been admitted as a party may amend the petition without requesting leave of the Board up to 15 days prior to the first prehearing conference scheduled in the proceeding, but such an amended petition must satisfy the specificity requirements described above.

Not later than 15 days prior to the first prehearing conference scheduled in the proceeding, a petitioner shall file a supplement to the petition to intervene which must include a list of the contentions which are sought to be litigated in the matter. Each contention must consist of a specific statement of the issue of law or fact to be raised or controverted. In addition, the petitioner shall provide a brief explanation of the bases of the contention and a concise statement of the alleged facts or expert opinion which support the contention and on which the petitioner intends to rely in proving the contention at the hearing. The petitioner must also provide references to those specific sources and documents of which the petitioner is aware and on which the petitioner intends to rely to establish those facts or expert opinion. Petitioner must provide sufficient information to show that a genuine dispute exists with the applicant on a material issue of law or fact. Contentions shall be limited to matters within the scope of the amendment under consideration. The contention must be one which, if

proven, would entitle the petitioner to relief. A petitioner who fails to file such a supplement which satisfies these requirements with respect to at least one contention will not be permitted to participate as a party.

Those permitted to intervene become parties to the proceeding, subject to any limitations in the order granting leave to intervene, and have the opportunity to participate fully in the conduct of the hearing, including the opportunity to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses.

If the amendment is issued before the expiration of the 30-day hearing period, the Commission will make a final determination on the issue of no significant hazards consideration. If a hearing is requested, the final determination will serve to decide when the hearing is held.

If the final determination is that the amendment request involves no significant hazards consideration, the Commission may issue the amendment and make it immediately effective, notwithstanding the request for a hearing. Any hearing held would take place after issuance of the amendment.

If the final determination is that the amendment request involves a significant hazards consideration, any hearing held would take place before the issuance of any amendment.

A request for a hearing or a petition for leave to intervene must be filed with the Secretary of the Commission, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, Attention: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff, or may be delivered to the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, by the above date. A copy of the petition should also be sent to the Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, and to Bryan A. Snapp, Esquire, Assoc. General Counsel, PP&L, Inc., 2 North Ninth St., GENTW3, Allentown, PA 18101-1179, attorney for the licensee.

Nontimely filings of petitions for leave to intervene, amended petitions, supplemental petitions and/or requests for hearing will not be entertained absent a determination by the Commission, the presiding officer or the presiding Atomic Safety and Licensing Board that the petition and/or request should be granted based upon a balancing of the factors specified in 10 CFR 2.714(a)(1)(i)-(v) and 2.714(d).

For further details with respect to this action, see the application for amendment dated April 10, 2000, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and accessible electronically through the ADAMS Public Electronic Reading Room link at the NRC Web site (<http://www.nrc.gov>).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 14th day of April 2000.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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