The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has authorized Southern Nuclear Operating Company to load nuclear fuel and begin operation at Vogtle Unit 3 in Georgia, the first reactor to reach this point in the agency’s combined license process. SNC recently informed the agency that the company completed the inspections, tests, analyses, and acceptance criteria needed to show Vogtle Unit 3 can begin safe operations.

“This is the first time we’ve authorized a reactor’s initial startup through our Part 52 licensing process,” said Andrea Veil, Director of the NRC’s Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. “Before authorization, we independently verified that Vogtle Unit 3 has been properly built and will protect public health and safety when it transitions to operation. Our resident inspectors at Vogtle will keep a close eye on Unit 3 as the fuel load and startup testing move forward. We’re focused on safety so the country can use Vogtle’s additional carbon-free electricity. We will maintain this focus as we license the next generation of new reactors.”

The NRC’s decision moves Vogtle Unit 3, adjacent to the operating Units 1 and 2, near Waynesboro, Georgia, out of the construction reactor oversight program and into the operating reactor oversight process. Vogtle Unit 4 remains under construction.

The information supporting the agency’s decision to allow Southern Nuclear Operating Company to load fuel and begin operation of Vogtle Unit 3 is available on the NRC’s website, which also has information on the review and issuance of the combined licenses for Vogtle Units 3 and 4.