

The NRC staff has reviewed the basis and supporting information provided by the licensee in the exemption request. The NRC staff has noted that the licensee's record of ensuring a leak-tight containment has improved markedly since 1985. All "as-found" Type A tests since 1985 have passed and the results of the Type A testing have been confirmatory of the Type B and C tests which will continue to be performed. The licensee will perform the general containment inspection although it is only required by Appendix J (Section V.A.) to be performed in conjunction with Type A tests. The NRC staff considers that these inspections, though limited in scope, provide an important added level of confidence in the continued integrity of the containment boundary.

The Surry Unit 2 containment is of the subatmospheric design. During operation, the containment is maintained at a subatmospheric pressure (approximately 10 psia) which provides for constant monitoring of the containment integrity and further obviates the need for Type A testing at this time. If the containment air partial pressure exceeds the established Technical Specification limit, the unit must be shut down.

The NRC staff has also made use of a draft staff report, NUREG-1493, which provides the technical justification for the present Appendix J rulemaking effort which also includes a 10-year test interval for Type A tests. The integrated leakage rate test, or Type A test, measures overall containment leakage. However, operating experience with all types of containments used in this country demonstrates that essentially all containment leakage can be detected by local leakage rate tests (Type B and C). According to results given in NUREG-1493, out of 180 ILRT reports covering 110 individual reactors and approximately 770 years of operating history, only 5 ILRT failures were found which local leakage rate testing could not detect. This is 3% of all failures. This study agrees well with previous NRC staff studies which show that Type B and C testing can detect a very large percentage of containment leaks.

The Nuclear Management and Resources Council (NUMARC), now the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), collected and provided the NRC staff with summaries of data to assist in the Appendix J rulemaking effort. NUMARC collected results of 144 ILRTs from 33 units; 23 ILRTs exceeded $1.0L_a$. Of these, only nine were not due to Type B or C leakage penalties. The NEI data also added another perspective. The NEI data show that in about one-third of the

cases exceeding allowable leakage, the as-found leakage was less than $2L_a$; in one case the leakage was found to be approximately $2L_a$; in one case the as-found leakage was less than $3L_a$; one case approached $10L_a$; and in one case the leakage was found to be approximately $21L_a$. For about half of the failed ILRTs the as-found leakage was not quantified. These data show that, for those ILRTs for which the leakage was quantified, the leakage values are small in comparison to the leakage value at which the risk to the public starts to increase over the value of risk corresponding to L_a (approximately $200L_a$, as discussed in NUREG-1493). Therefore, based on those considerations, it is unlikely that an extension of one cycle for the performance of the Appendix J, Type A test at Surry, Unit 2, would result in significant degradation of the overall containment integrity. As a result, the application of the regulation in these particular circumstances is not needed to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule.

Based on generic and plant specific data, the NRC staff finds the basis for the licensee's proposed exemption to allow a one-time exemption to permit a schedular extension of one cycle for the performance of the Appendix Type A test, provided that the general containment inspection is performed, to be acceptable.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that granting this Exemption will not have a significant impact on the environment (60 FR 11997).

This Exemption is effective upon issuance and shall expire at the completion of the 1996 refueling outage.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland this 3rd day of March 1995.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Steven A. Varga,

*Director, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II,
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.*

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[Docket Nos. 50-373 and 50-374]

Commonwealth Edison Co., LaSalle County Station, Units 1 and 2; Environmental Assessment and Finding of no Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an exemption from Facility Operating License Nos. NPF-11 and NPF-18, issued to Commonwealth Edison Company (the licensee), for operation of the LaSalle

County Station, Units 1 and 2, located in LaSalle County, Illinois.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of Proposed Action

Section III.D.1(a) of Appendix J to 10 CFR part 50 requires the performance of three Type A tests (overall integrated leakage rate tests) (ILRT), at approximately equal intervals during each 10-year service period, with the third test of each set being conducted when the plant is shut down for the 10-year plant inservice inspections. Section III.A6(b) of Appendix J to 10 CFR part 50 specifies additional requirements if two consecutive periodic Type A tests fail to meet the applicable acceptance criteria. The additional requirements entail performing Type A tests at each plant shut down for refueling or eighteen month interval, whichever occurs first, until two consecutive Type A tests meet the acceptance criteria, after which, the testing schedule of Section III.D can be resumed. LaSalle County Station, Unit 2, experienced Type A test failures for the "as-found" condition at the first, third and fourth refueling outages as a result of penalties from local leak rate test (LLRT) (Type B and C) failures. Pursuant to the requirements of Section III.A6(b), a Type A test was performed during the fifth refueling outage for Unit 2 and the results satisfied the applicable acceptance criteria. Without the requested exemption, another Type A test will need to be performed during the sixth refueling outage for Unit 2 (scheduled for early 1995) due to the requirements of both, Section III.A6(b) which requires two consecutive successful tests prior to resuming the normal testing interval and Section III.D.1(a) because the sixth refueling outage is the last refueling outage of the first 10-year plant inservice inspections period. The licensee proposes to resume the testing interval of Section III.D, based upon the successful test during the fifth refueling outage and the creation of a corrective action plan for Type C test failures, and decouple the Type A test schedule from the inservice inspection period. The result of this proposal would be that the next scheduled Type A test would be performed during the seventh refueling outage for Unit 2 (currently scheduled for late 1996) in accordance with a test interval of between thirty and fifty months.

An example is provided in 10 CFR 50.12(a)(2)(ii) of a special circumstances for which the NRC will consider granting exemptions that involve cases for which the application of the

regulation is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule. The licensee completed a successful ILRT test during the fifth refueling outage for Unit 2 and has developed a corrective action plan for leakage through specific containment penetrations. Strict application of Appendix J would require performance of another ILRT during the sixth refueling outage in order to address the additional testing requirements of Appendix J, Section III.A.6(b) and the Section III.D.1(a) requirement to perform an ILRT during the 10-year plant inservice inspections. In order to avoid performance of an ILRT during the sixth refueling outage, the licensee has proposed a one-time exemption from Section III.A.6(b) (additional testing requirements) and a permanent exemption from Section III.D.1(a), in order to de-couple the Appendix J ILRT test schedule and the 10-year inservice inspection periods. Granting the exemption would result in the performance of the next Unit 2 ILRT during the seventh refueling outage, which is consistent with the regular testing interval of approximately once per forty months.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed exemption would allow the licensee to resume a normal ILRT testing interval and thereby preclude the need to perform an ILRT during the sixth refueling outage of LaSalle, Unit 2. Performance of an ILRT during the upcoming Unit 2 refueling outage would result in the collection of significant radiation dose, approximately 3 person-rems, by licensee personnel. The need for the exemption results from the requirement to perform the ILRT during refueling outages associated with the 10-year plant inservice inspections and the requirements to perform additional ILRT testing in the event that consecutive ILRT's fail, even if those failures are a result of leakage through identified penetrations.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed exemption and concludes that granting the one-time relief from Section III.A.6(b) and granting relief from Section III.D.1(a) of Appendix J to 10 CFR part 50 does not affect the configuration of plant systems or plant operating practices. The proposed exemption is limited to the scheduling of a required Type A test during the sixth refueling outage of Unit 2 and a subsequent decoupling of the Type A tests from the inservice inspection period. Previous testing has demonstrated the integrity of the

containment structure. Leakage through containment penetrations and values would continue to be identified by performance of LLRT. Therefore, no increase in the release of radioactive materials following an accident would result from the revision of the Type A test schedule. Changes to the Type A test schedule do not affect the radioactive effluent release during normal operation. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that this proposed action would result in no significant radiological environmental impact.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed exemption only involves the scheduling of ILRT testing. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and there are no other nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed exemption.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

Since the Commission concludes that there are no significant environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impacts need not be evaluated. The principal alternative would be to deny the requested exemption and require the licensee to conduct the ILRT during the sixth refueling outage of LaSalle, Unit 2. Denial would not significantly reduce the environmental impact of plant operation and would result in lost electrical generation and expense of significant licensee resources.

Alternate Use of Resources

This action does not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement for the LaSalle County Station dated November 1978.

Agencies and Persons Contacted

The NRC staff reviewed the licensee's request and consulted with the Illinois State official. The State Official had no comments regarding the NRC's proposed action.

Finding of no Significant Impact

Based on the foregoing environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed exemption.

For further details with respect to this action, see the request for exemption dated October 24, 1994, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room,

the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room, the Public Library of Illinois Valley Community College, Rural Route No. 1, Oglesey, Illinois.

Dated at Rockville, MD., this 1st day of March 1995.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

George F. Dick, Jr.,

Acting Director, Project Directorate III-2, Division of Reactor Projects III/IV, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

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Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards Subcommittee Meeting on Thermal Hydraulic Phenomena; Meeting

The ACRS Subcommittee on Thermal Hydraulic Phenomena will hold a meeting on March 27 and 28, 1995, Room T-2B1, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland.

The entire meeting will be open to public attendance, with the exception of a portion that may be closed to discuss Westinghouse Electric Corporation proprietary information pursuant to (5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(4)).

The agenda for the subject meeting shall be as follows: Monday, March 27, 1995-8:30 a.m. until the conclusion of business and Tuesday, March 28, 1995-8:30 a.m. until the conclusion of business.

The Subcommittee will continue its review of the NRC research program to modify the RELAP5/MOD3 code for use in the AP600 design certification review. The focus of this meeting will be on the development of the Phenomena Identification and Tanking Table (PRT) in this regard. The purpose of this meeting is to gather information, analyze relevant issues and facts, and to formulate proposed positions and actions, as appropriate, for deliberation by the full Committee.

Oral statements may be presented by members of the public with the concurrence of the Subcommittee Chairman; written statements will be accepted and made available to the Committee. Electronic recordings will be permitted only during those portions of the meeting that are open to the public, and questions may ask only by members of the Subcommittee, its consultants, and staff. Persons desiring to make oral statements should notify the cognizant ACRS staff engineer named below five days prior to the meeting, if possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.