all individuals while inside the protected area.

It should also be noted that the proposed system is only for individuals with authorized unescorted access and will not be used for those individuals requiring escorts.

Sandia National Laboratories conducted testing that demonstrated that the hand geometry equipment possesses strong performance characteristics. Details of the testing performed are in the Sandia report, ''A Performance Evaluation of Biometric Identification Devices,'' SAND91—0276 UC—906 Unlimited Release, June 1991. Based on the Sandia report and the licensee's experience using the current photo picture identification system, the false acceptance rate for the proposed hand geometry system would be at least equivalent to that of the current system. To assure that the proposed system will continue to meet the general performance requirements of 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5), the licensee will implement a process for testing the system. The site security plan will also be revised to allow implementation of the hand geometry system and to allow employees and contractors with unescorted access to keep their picture badges in their possession when leaving the Palisades site.

IV

For the foregoing reasons, the NRC staff has determined that the proposed alternative measures for protection against radiological sabotage meet the same high assurance objective and the general performance requirements of 10 CFR 73.55. In addition, the staff has determined that the overall level of the proposed system's performance will provide protection against radiological sabotage equivalent to that which is provided by the current system in accordance with 10 CFR 73.55.

Accordingly, the Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 73.5, this 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 Commission hereby grants the following exemption:

The requirement of 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5) that individuals who have been granted unescorted access and are not employed by the licensee are to return their picture badges upon exit from the protected area is no longer necessary. Thus, these individuals may keep their picture badges in their possession upon leaving the Palisades site. The exemption is granted on the condition that the licensee implements a system testing process and revises the site security plan as discussed in Section III above.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the granting of this exemption will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (62 FR 22975).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 14th day of May, 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Samuel J. Collins,

Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 97–13275 Filed 5–20–97; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50–368]

Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., et al.; Notice of Withdrawal of Application for Amendment to Facility Operating License

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) has granted the request of Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (the licensee) to withdraw its April 22, 1996, application for proposed amendment to Facility Operating License No. NPF–8 for the Joseph M. Farley Nuclear Plant, Unit 2, located in Houston County, Alabama.

The proposed amendment would have revised the facility technical specifications pertaining to implementation of an L* repair criteria for the FNP Unit 2 steam generators.

The Commission had previously issued a Notice of Consideration of Issuance of Amendment published in the **Federal Register** on July 3, 1996 (61 FR 34899). However, by letter dated May 5, 1997, the licensee withdrew the proposed change.

For further details with respect to this action, see the application for amendment dated April 22, 1996, as supplemented by letters dated May 3, July 25, August 30, September 16 and 19, and October 8, 1996, and the licensee's letter dated May 5, 1997, which withdrew the application for license amendment. The above documents are 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 located at the Houston-Love Memorial Library, 212 W. Burdeshaw Street, Post Office Box 1369, Dothan, Alabama.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 14th day of May 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Jacob I. Zimmerman,

Project Manager, Project Directorate II–2, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 97–13272 Filed 5–20–97; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50–334]

Duquesne Light Company; Ohio Edison Company; Pennsylvania Power Company; Beaver Valley Power Station, Unit No. 1; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an amendment to Facility Operating License No. DPR–66, issued to Duquesne Light Company, et al. (the licensee), for operation of the Beaver Valley Power Station, Unit No. 1 (BVPS–1), located in Beaver County, Pennsylvania.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed amendment would revise BVPS–1 Technical Specification (TS) 5.3.1.2 to allow storage of new reactor fuel in the new fuel storage racks with an enrichment not to exceed a nominal 5.0 weight percent Uranium-235.

The proposed amendment is in accordance with the licensee's application for dated February 27, 1997.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The proposed changes to the Facility Operating License are needed so that the licensee can store and use more highly enriched fuel, and thereby provide the flexibility of extending the fuel irradiation/burnup to permit longer fuel cycles (i.e., longer continuous period of operation). Use of the proposed more highly enriched fuels would require the use of fewer fuel assemblies over the remaining life of the plant.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed revisions to the TS. The proposed revisions would permit storage of new fuel in the new fuel storage racks and subsequent use of fuel enriched with Uranium-235 (U–235) to a nominal 5.0 weight percent (5.0 weight percent plus a tolerance of 0.05 weight percent). The safety considerations associated with the storage of and subsequent reactor

operation with higher enriched fuel have been evaluated by the NRC staff. Based on its review, the NRC staff has concluded that such changes would not adversely affect plant safety. The proposed changes have no adverse affect on the probability of any accident. The higher enrichment, with increased fuel burnup, may slightly change the mix of fission products that might be released in the event of a serious accident, but such small changes would not significantly affect the consequences of serious accidents. No changes are being made in the types or amounts of any radiological effluents that may be released offsite. There is no significant increase in the allowable individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that the proposed action would result in no significant radiological environmental impact.

The environmental impacts of transportation resulting from the use of higher enrichment fuel and extended irradiation were published and discussed in the staff assessment entitled ''NRC Assessment of the Environmental Effects of Transportation Resulting from Extended Fuel Enrichment and Irradiation,'' dated July 7, 1988. This assessment was published in connection with an Environmental Assessment related to the Shearon Harris Nuclear Plant, Unit 1, which was published in the **Federal Register** (53 FR 30355) on August 11, 1988, as corrected on August 24, 1988 (53 FR 32322). As indicated therein, the environmental cost contribution of an increase in the fuel enrichment of up to 5.0 weight percent Uranium-235 and irradiation limits of up to 60,000 gigawatt-days-per-metric-ton (GWD/MT) are either unchanged or may, in fact, be reduced from those summarized in Table S–4 as set forth in 10 CFR 51.52(c). These findings are applicable to the proposed increase at BVPS–1 given that the proposal involves 5% and burnup of less than 60,000 GWD/MT. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed amendment.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts of reactor operation with higher enrichment and extended irradiation, the proposed action involves features located entirely within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR part 20. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant nonradiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternative to the Proposed Action

Since the Commission has concluded that there are no significant environmental effects that would result from the proposed action, any other alternative would have equal or greater environmental impacts and need not be evaluated.

The principal alternative would be to deny the requested amendment. This would not reduce environmental impact of plant operations and would result in reduced operational flexibility.

Alternative Use of Resources

The action does not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement for the Beaver Valley Power Station, Unit No. 1 dated July 1973.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on April 14, 1997, the staff consulted with the Pennsylvania State official, Mr. Michael P. Murphy of the Bureau of Radiation Protection, Department of Environmental Protection, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed license amendment.

Based upon the foregoing environmental assessment, we conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

For further details with respect to this proposed action, see the application for amendment dated February 27, 1997, that 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—5- room located at the B. F. Jones Memorial Library, 663 Franklin Avenue, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania 15001.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 15th day of May 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

John F. Stolz,

Director, Project Directorate I–2, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 97–13271 Filed 5–20–97; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Biweekly Notice

Applications And Amendments To Facility Operating Licenses Involving No Significant Hazards Considerations

I. Background

Pursuant to Public Law 97-415, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission or NRC staff) is publishing this regular biweekly notice. Public Law 97-415 revised section 189 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), to require the Commission to publish notice of any amendments issued, or proposed to be issued, under a new provision of section 189 of the Act. This provision grants the Commission the authority to issue and make immediately effective any amendment to an operating license upon a determination by the Commission that such amendment involves no significant hazards consideration, notwithstanding the pendency before the Commission of a request for a hearing from any person.

This biweekly notice includes all notices of amendments issued, or proposed to be issued from April 28, 1997 through May 9, 1997. The last biweekly notice was published on May 7, 1997 (62 FR 24984).

Notice Of Consideration Of Issuance Of Amendments To Facility Operating Licenses, Proposed No Significant Hazards Consideration Determination, And Opportunity For A Hearing

The Commission has made a proposed determination that the following amendment requests involve 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. The basis for this proposed determination for each amendment request is shown below.

The Commission is seeking public comments on this proposed determination. Any comments received within 30 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