

March 23, 2001

Mr. Michael A. Balduzzi
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Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation
185 Old Ferry Road
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Brattleboro, VT 05302-7002

SUBJECT: VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION - ISSUANCE OF
AMENDMENT RE: SECONDARY CONTAINMENT SYSTEMS (TAC NO.
MB0145)

Dear Mr. Balduzzi:

The Commission has issued the enclosed Amendment No. 197 to Facility Operating License DPR-28 for the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station, in response to your application dated September 26, 2000.

The amendment revises Technical Specification (TS) requirements regarding secondary containment systems, including the Standby Gas Treatment System (SBGTS). The affected TS sections are 1.0, Definitions; 3/4.7.B, Standby Gas Treatment System; and 3/4.7.C, Secondary Containment System. In addition, a new TS section, 3/4.7.E, Reactor Building Automatic Ventilation System Isolation Valves (RBAVSIVs), is proposed. Some of the proposed changes are administrative in nature and do not affect the technical aspects of the requirements. Associated changes to the TS Bases are also being made to conform to the changed TS. The proposed changes provide certain additional flexibility in operations when equipment is made or found to be inoperable, while also ensuring appropriate actions are taken to place the plant in a safe condition under such conditions.

A copy of the related Safety Evaluation is also enclosed. Notice of Issuance will be included in the Commission's biweekly Federal Register notice.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Robert M. Pulsifer, Project Manager, Section 2
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-271

Enclosures: 1. Amendment No. 197 to
License No. DPR-28
2. Safety Evaluation

cc w/encls: See next page

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/RA/

Robert M. Pulsifer, Project Manager, Section

2

Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Enclosures: 1. Amendment No. 197 to
License No. DPR-28
2. Safety Evaluation

cc w/encls: See next page

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VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER CORPORATION

DOCKET NO. 50-271

VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION

AMENDMENT TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE

Amendment No. 197
License No. DPR-28

1. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) has found that:
 - A. The application for amendment filed by the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation (the licensee) dated September 26, 2000, complies with the standards and requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's rules and regulations set forth in 10 CFR Chapter I;
 - B. The facility will operate in conformity with the application, the provisions of the Act, and the rules and regulations of the Commission;
 - C. There is reasonable assurance: (i) that the activities authorized by this amendment can be conducted without endangering the health and safety of the public, and (ii) that such activities will be conducted in compliance with the Commission's regulations;
 - D. The issuance of this amendment will not be inimical to the common defense and security or to the health and safety of the public; and
 - E. The issuance of this amendment is in accordance with 10 CFR Part 51 of the Commission's regulations and all applicable requirements have been satisfied.

2. Accordingly, the license is amended by changes to the Technical Specifications as indicated in the attachment to this license amendment, and paragraph 3.B of Facility Operating License No. DPR-28 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(B) Technical Specifications

The Technical Specifications contained in Appendix A, as revised through Amendment No. 197, are hereby incorporated in the license. The licensee shall operate the facility in accordance with the Technical Specifications.

3. This license amendment is effective as of its date of issuance and shall be implemented within 60 days.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

/RA/

James W. Clifford, Chief, Section 2
Project Directorate I
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Attachment: Changes to the Technical
Specifications

Date of Issuance: March 23, 2001

ATTACHMENT TO LICENSE AMENDMENT NO. 197

FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NO. DPR-28

DOCKET NO. 50-271

Replace the following pages of the Appendix A Technical Specifications with the attached revised pages. The revised pages are identified by amendment number and contain marginal lines indicating the areas of change.

<u>Remove</u>	<u>Insert</u>
3	3
4	4
152	152
153	153
154	154
155	155
155a	155a
156	156
157	157
158	158
-----	158a
165a	165a
165b	165b
166	166
-----	166a
166b	166b
171	171

SAFETY EVALUATION BY THE OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
RELATED TO AMENDMENT NO. 197 TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NO. DPR-28
VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER CORPORATION
VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER STATION
DOCKET NO. 50-271

1.0 INTRODUCTION

By letter dated September 26, 2000, the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation (the licensee) submitted a request to amend the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station (Vermont Yankee) Technical Specifications (TSs). The proposed amendment would revise the TS requirements regarding secondary containment systems, including the Standby Gas Treatment System (SBGTS). The affected TS sections are 1.0, Definitions; 3/4.7.B, Standby Gas Treatment System; and 3/4.7.C, Secondary Containment System. In addition, a new TS section, 3/4.7.E, Reactor Building Automatic Ventilation System Isolation Valves (RBAVSIVs), is proposed. Some of the proposed changes are administrative in nature and do not affect the technical aspects of the requirements. Associated changes to the TS Bases are also being made to conform to the changed TSs. The proposed changes provide certain additional flexibility in operations when equipment is made or found to be inoperable, while also ensuring appropriate actions are taken to place the plant in a safe condition under such conditions.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Vermont Yankee is a 1593 megawatt-thermal General Electric BWR/4 plant with a Mark I primary containment structure. Following a design-basis accident (DBA), the main function of the SBGTS is to ensure that any airborne radioactivity that might leak from the primary containment into the secondary containment is filtered and adsorbed prior to being exhausted to the environment. The main function of the secondary containment following a DBA is to contain, dilute, and hold up radioactivity that might leak from the primary containment. The RBAVSIVs form part of the secondary containment system boundary. Under normal conditions, they allow the secondary containment to be ventilated, but when necessary, they can isolate quickly in order to limit a potential release of radioactivity through penetration flow paths. These three systems work in conjunction with each other to limit potential releases of radioactivity to the environment.

Vermont Yankee was licensed before the advent of standardized TSs. Therefore, the requirements of the Vermont Yankee TSs are not always consistent with present standards and guidelines. Furthermore, operating experience has shown that parts of the Vermont Yankee TSs could be improved to permit clearer and more consistent interpretations.

The licensee has proposed 10 changes to the Vermont Yankee TSs that would standardize and clarify TS requirements which primarily concern the secondary containment and SBGTS. The licensee has modeled its proposed changes upon the Standard Technical Specifications (STSs) for General Electric BWR/4s, NUREG-1433, Revision 1. The STSs are the industry standard for technical specifications, and have been approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff.

3.0 EVALUATION

The licensee has sequentially numbered the 10 proposed TS changes which compose its submittal. For clarity, the staff has addressed each change individually.

3.1 Change #1

Current technical specification (CTS) 1.0.R.1, the definition of Startup/Hot Standby Mode, reads as follows:

In this mode the low turbine condenser volume trip is bypassed when condenser vacuum is less than 12 inches Hg

In the cited phrase, the licensee proposes to replace volume with vacuum. The licensee has stated that there is no trip based upon low condenser volume and that the only trip fitting the above definition is based upon low condenser vacuum. The licensee has additionally stated that the current phrasing of TS 1.0.R.1 is likely due to a typographical error, which, though it was not in the original full-term operating license issued via Amendment 5 in 1973, has existed at least since the issuance of Amendment 70 in 1981. Because this is an editorial change and now reflects the actual trip identification, the staff finds this proposed correction to be acceptable.

3.2 Change #2

CTS 1.0.U reads as follows:

Secondary Containment Integrity - Secondary containment integrity means that the reactor building is intact and the following conditions are met:

1. At least one door in each access opening is closed.
2. The standby gas treatment system is operable.
3. All reactor building automatic ventilation system isolation valves are operable or are secured in the isolated position.

The licensee's proposed change is the deletion of the entire definition provided by CTS 1.0.U. The licensee has stated that the presence of the current definition could cause confusion when compared to the requirements of other existing TSs. According to CTS 1.0.U, for secondary containment integrity to exist, the SBGTS must be operable. If it were interpreted that one inoperable train of the SBGTS precludes secondary containment integrity, a contradiction would arise with other TSs that would permit limited operations with one train of the SBGTS inoperable. To resolve this contradiction, the licensee has proposed to delete the above definition of Secondary Containment Integrity. However, in conjunction with the deletion of this definition, the licensee has proposed an insert to the Vermont Yankee TS Bases which would provide a revised

definition of secondary containment integrity stating the SBGTS's requirement for achieving secondary containment integrity in terms of functionality rather than operability. The licensee's revised definition of secondary containment integrity is discussed in Change #10.

This proposed deletion eliminates confusion, provides consistency with the TS bases, is consistent with the STSs, and safety margins are maintained; therefore, the staff finds this proposed TS change to be acceptable.

3.3 Change #3

This proposed change would create consistency in the terminology used to refer to a subsystem of the SBGTS. In CTS section 3/4.7.B, a subsystem of the SBGTS is referred to by three different names: train, circuit, and branch. The proposed change would eliminate any possible ambiguity associated with the differing terminologies by using a single term - train, to refer to a subsystem of the SBGTS. There are 10 instances of the terms branch or circuit in CTS section 3/4.7.B which would be converted to train under this proposed change. This proposed change would achieve consistency with the terminology used in the STSs, and the licensee has stated that it would also conform to common use at Vermont Yankee. The staff has reviewed and evaluated each instance and has determined that SBGTS requirements remain unchanged; therefore, the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.4 Change #4

This proposed change clarifies requirements for the SBGTS to be considered operable. CTS 3.7.B.2 specifies three limiting conditions for operation (LCOs) based upon acceptance criteria for surveillances of several key components of the SBGTS, including high efficiency particulate air filters, charcoal filters, and fans. These surveillances are intended to verify the operability of the SBGTS by verifying the functionality of its required components. If any required component of an SBGTS train cannot perform its function, it would be expected that the affected train would be declared inoperable. However, this is not explicitly stated in the CTSs; only an inability to meet the second of the three LCOs explicitly requires that the affected train shall be considered inoperable. If the first or third LCOs are not met, there is no explicit requirement that the affected SBGTS train be considered inoperable, nor is any further action specified. Therefore, there is ambiguity as to what, if anything, should be done in these cases.

The licensee's proposed change would eliminate this ambiguity. The statement in the second LCO specifying that, if it is not met, the SBGTS shall be considered inoperable would be removed. Instead, a statement would be added subsequent to all three LCOs in CTS 3.7.B.2 stating that if any one of them is not met, the affected train of the SBGTS shall be considered inoperable.

The staff believes that the licensee's proposed change more clearly expresses the intent of CTS 3.7.B.2 by eliminating ambiguity with the LCO's by adding TS 3.7.B.2.d, that states, if any of the LCO's are not met then SBGTS shall be considered inoperable. The proposed change is also more conservative than the current TS by assuring the SBGTS is declared inoperable if any of the LCO's are not met. Therefore, the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.5 Change #5

This proposed change would more clearly define required actions regarding reactor operations based on SBGTS operability. CTS 3.7.B.3.a reads as follows:

From and after the date that one circuit of the Standby Gas Treatment System is made or found to be inoperable for any reason, reactor operation is permissible only during the succeeding seven days unless such circuit is sooner made operable, provided that during such seven days all active components of the other standby gas treatment circuit shall be operable. *

No actions are prescribed in CTS 3.7.B.3.a if one train of the SBGTS is inoperable and any active component of the other train is not operable. Instead, the required actions are given in the new TS 3.7.B.4 (see change #7) which provides the requirements when two trains of SBGTS are inoperable or as made applicable by TS 3.7.B.3. To emphasize this location, the licensee has proposed appending to CTS 3.7.B.3.a the following passage:

If this condition cannot be met during reactor operation, or the inoperable train is not restored to operable status within seven days, the actions and completion times of Specification 3.7.B.4.a shall apply.

The addition of the above passage would clarify the location of additional TS requirements; therefore, the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.6 Change #6

This proposed change affects CTS 3.7.B.3.b, which reads as follows:

From and after the date that one circuit of the Standby Gas Treatment System is made or found to be inoperable for any reason, operations requiring secondary containment are permissible only during the succeeding seven days unless such circuit is sooner made operable, provided that during such seven days all active components, including the associated Emergency Diesel Generator of the other standby gas treatment circuit shall be operable. *

This proposed change would delete from the above citation the word only and additionally append the following passage to TS 3.7.B.3.b:

If this condition cannot be met during a refueling or cold shutdown condition, the actions and completion times of Specification 3.7.B.4.b shall apply. After seven days with an inoperable train of the Standby Gas Treatment System during refueling or cold shutdown conditions requiring secondary containment integrity, the operable train of the Standby Gas Treatment System shall be placed in operation and its associated diesel generator shall be operable, or the actions and completion times of Specification 3.7.B.4.b shall apply.

* Change #3 would substitute "train" for each of the three instances of "circuit" in this passage.

Current requirements demand an unconditional halt to operations requiring secondary containment integrity after the expiration of the conditional 7-day allowed outage time for an inoperable train of the SBGTS given in CTS 3.7.B.3.b. The licensee's proposed changes would allow the continuance of operations requiring the integrity of secondary containment during shutdown and refueling conditions beyond 7 days under the further conditions that the operable train of the SBGTS is placed into operation and its associated diesel generator is operable. The provision for further operation in the proposed addition requires deletion of the word "only" from the existing TS 3.7.B.3.b to prevent a contradiction.

The licensee has stated that by placing the operable train of the SBGTS into operation and having its associated diesel generator in operable status, no failures which could prevent automatic actuation of the SBGTS have occurred in the past. Additionally, the licensee determined that any failure would be readily detected. If the licensee cannot or does not desire to meet this condition, it may alternately take immediate action to suspend core alterations, movement of irradiated fuel assemblies or the fuel cask in secondary containment, and operations with the potential to drain the reactor vessel (OPDRVs). The licensee has pointed out that this proposed change and its underlying strategy are consistent with the applicable guidance of the STSs (3.6.4.3.C.1).

The staff notes that the proposed change is more permissive than the current requirements in the Vermont Yankee TSs. However, as the proposed change is consistent with the STSs, the staff believes that the licensee's approach of minimizing risk, through either mitigating the consequences or reducing the frequency of SBGTS failure, is valid. Accordingly, the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.7 Change #7

CTS 3.7.B.4 reads as follows:

If this condition cannot be met, procedures shall be initiated immediately to establish the conditions listed in Specifications 3.7.C.1(a) through (d), and compliance shall be completed within 24 hours thereafter.

Through its reference to TS 3.7.C.1, the above current specification requires that action be immediately initiated, to ensure secondary containment integrity is maintained during certain modes and conditions with compliance completed within 24 hours. These certain modes and conditions include: a) whenever the reactor is in the Run Mode, Startup Mode, or Hot Shutdown condition; b) during movement of irradiated fuel assemblies or fuel cask in secondary containment; c) during alteration of the reactor core; or d) during operations with the potential for draining the reactor vessel. TS 3.7.C.2 states with secondary containment integrity not maintained while in Run Mode, Startup Mode, or Hot Shutdown condition, restore secondary containment integrity within 4 hours. Additionally, TS 3.7.C.3 states that if TS 3.7.C.2 cannot be met, place the reactor in the Hot Shutdown condition within 12 hours and in Cold Shutdown within the following 24 hours.

The licensee states that the application of this specification (CTS 3.7.B.4) and what actions are required when applicable is confusing.

The licensee has proposed to replace the current specification with the proposed TS 3.7.B.4:

With two trains of the Standby Gas Treatment System inoperable or as made applicable by Specification 3.7.B.3:

- a. With the reactor in the run mode, startup mode, or hot shutdown condition, the reactor shall be placed in hot shutdown within 12 hours and cold shutdown within 36 hours.
- b. During movement of irradiated fuel assemblies or the fuel cask in the secondary containment, during core alterations, or during operations with the potential for draining the reactor vessel, immediately:
 - i. Suspend movement of irradiated fuel assemblies and the fuel cask in secondary containment; and
 - ii. Suspend core alterations; and
 - iii. Initiate action to suspend operations with the potential for draining the reactor vessel.

The proposed change would not alter the current requirement to take immediate action to suspend the handling of irradiated fuel, core alterations, and OPDRVs. This change would clearly delineate the requirements with two SBGTS trains inoperable or as made applicable by TS 3.7.B.3. In effect, this change eliminates the 12-hour period that the CTS 3.7.B.4 allows for initiating actions to be in compliance with TS 3.7.C.1 a through d before entering the Hot Shutdown requirement within 12 hours. The proposed actions and completion times are also consistent with the STSs.

Because this change clarifies the requirements for SBGTS inoperability, is consistent with STS, and is more conservative regarding when the licensee must enter a shutdown action statement, the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.8 Change #8

CTS 3.7.C.1.a requires that, during Run Mode, Startup Mode, or Hot Shutdown Condition, secondary containment integrity must be met. The licensee has proposed to annotate this specification with the following footnote:

*NOTE: The reactor mode switch may be changed to either the Run or Startup/Hot Standby position, and operation not considered to be in the Run Mode or Startup Mode, to allow testing of instrumentation associated with the reactor mode switch interlock functions, provided:

- 1. Reactor coolant temperature is $\leq 212^{\circ}\text{F}$;
- 2. All control rods remain fully inserted in core cells containing one or more fuel assemblies; and
- 3. No core alterations are in progress.

The licensee has stated that the purpose of this proposed change is to facilitate certain periodic surveillance tests and calibrations associated with the reactor mode switch interlock functions

while the reactor is in a shutdown or refueling condition. These surveillances may require placing the reactor mode switch in a position other than Shutdown or Refuel. Because the position of the reactor mode switch is used as a criterion to determine in which mode the plant is operating, changing mode switch position for surveillance tests could imply that a new mode of operation has been entered.

The specific instance that has precipitated the licensee's request is the TS requirement for secondary containment integrity during Run Mode, Startup Mode, or Hot Shutdown condition. The proposed change would emphasize that, under the provisions stated in the note, a change in mode switch position would not constitute a change in operational mode. Therefore, as a result of the proposed change, the licensee would not be required to maintain secondary containment integrity during reactor mode switch interlock testing.

During normal operations in Shutdown and Refuel modes, interlock features of the reactor mode switch preclude reactivity excursions. The licensee has stated that this proposed change would essentially allow it to take administrative control of reactivity during the period of the testing of instrumentation associated with the reactor mode selector switch interlocks. The administrative reactivity controls would be implemented through the three provisions specified in the cited proposed note. The licensee has stated that, if these provisions are satisfied, there are no credible mechanisms for unacceptable reactivity excursions during interlock testing.

The licensee's proposed change is modeled upon specification 3.10.2 of the STSs. Similarly, STS 3.10.2 conditionally permits movement of the reactor mode switch without regarding such action as a mode change for the specific purpose of testing instrumentation associated with the reactor mode switch interlock functions. The Bases section for STS 3.10.2 validates the licensee's contention that, under the stated provisions, there are no credible mechanisms for unacceptable reactivity excursions.

Since there are no credible mechanisms for unacceptable reactivity excursions, and the licensee's proposed administrative reactivity controls are consistent with the STSs, the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.9 Change #9

This proposed change would add a new section, TS 3/4.7.E, detailing LCOs and surveillance requirements (SRs) for Reactor Building Automatic Ventilation System Isolation Valves (RBAVSIV). The proposed section 3/4.7.E would provide requirements which are consistent with the applicable STS section, 3.6.4.2. The proposed LCOs would specify requirements for RBAVSIV operability which closely correspond to requirements for secondary containment integrity. However, proposed LCOs 3.7.E.1 and 3.7.E.2 would specify that secondary containment integrity can be maintained temporarily if one or more RBAVSIVs in a given penetration flow path are inoperable and not isolated. Periods of 8 and 4 hours would be allowed for the existence of one or more inoperable RBAVSIVs in a given penetration flow path; and, appropriate actions are specified that would allow the affected valves to be considered isolated.

If the inoperable RBAVSIV(s) cannot be isolated within the specified completion times of LCOs 3.7.E.1 or 3.7.E.2 during Run Mode, Startup Mode, or Hot Standby Mode, then proposed LCO 3.7.E.3 would require that the reactor be brought to Hot Shutdown within 12 hours and Cold Shutdown within 36 hours. If the inoperable RBAVSIV(s) cannot be isolated within the specified

completion times of LCOs 3.7.E.1 or 3.7.E.2 during the movement of irradiated fuel, core alterations, or OPDRVs, actions would be required to be initiated immediately to suspend these activities.

The new TS section 4.7.E lists proposed SRs for RBAVSIV testing. This section would provide a frequency for verifying the isolation of penetration flow paths with one or more inoperable RBAVSIVs of once per 31 days during periods when secondary containment integrity is required. Additionally, this section includes the relocated CTS 4.7.C.1.d, which references applicable valve testing requirements. The licensee has stated that these proposed SR changes are intended to clarify requirements, and that practices concerning operability testing for RBAVSIVs will remain unchanged from the CTSS.

The addition of the new LCOs and SRs in TS 3/4.7.E would enhance safety by providing specific and clear LCOs and SRs for the RBAVSIVs. These operability requirements will help ensure that the secondary containment boundary is maintained.

Since TS 3/4.7.E provides an additional means for ensuring the secondary containment boundary is maintained and operability testing of the RBAVSIVs remain unchanged in accordance to TS 4.6.E , the staff finds this proposed change to be acceptable.

3.10 Change #10

This change will alter the Bases of the Vermont Yankee TSs to accurately reflect the proposed TS changes discussed in this evaluation. The staff has no objection to these changes.

The staff has concluded, based on the preceding considerations, that the 10 proposed changes to the Vermont Yankee TSs are acceptable and the staff has no objection to the proposed Bases changes.

4.0 STATE CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Commission's regulations, the Vermont State official was notified of the proposed issuance of the amendment. The State official had no comments.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION

The amendment changes a requirement with respect to installation or use of a facility component located within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20 and changes surveillance requirements. The NRC staff has determined that the amendment involves no significant increase in amounts, and no significant change in the types of any effluents that may be released offsite, and that there is no significant increase in individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. The Commission has previously issued a proposed finding that the amendment involves no significant hazards consideration, and there has been no public comment on such finding (65 FR 62394). Accordingly, the amendment meets the eligibility criteria for categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9). Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the issuance of the amendment.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Commission has concluded, based on the considerations discussed above, that: (1) there is reasonable assurance that the health and safety of the public will not be endangered by operation in the proposed manner, (2) such activities will be conducted in compliance with the Commission's regulations, and (3) the issuance of the amendment will not be inimical to the common defense and security or to the health and safety of the public.

Principal Contributor: J. Lehning

Date: March 23, 2001