

Mr. J. B. Beasley, Jr.  
Vice President  
Southern Nuclear Operating  
Company, Inc.  
Post Office Box 1295  
Birmingham, Alabama 35201-1295

November 13, 2001

SUBJECT: VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2 RE: ISSUANCE  
OF AMENDMENTS (TAC NOS. MB2817 AND 2818)

Dear Mr. Beasley:

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued the enclosed Amendment No. 123 to Facility Operating License NPF-68 and Amendment No. 101 to Facility Operating License NPF-81 for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2. The amendments consist of changes to the Technical Specifications (TS) in response to your application dated August 16, 2001.

The amendments delete TS Section 5.5.3, "Post Accident Sampling," for Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, and thereby eliminate the requirements to have and maintain the post-accident sampling system (PASS). The amendments also revise TS 5.5.2, "Primary Coolant Sources Outside Containment," to reflect the elimination of PASS.

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

Sincerely,

/RA/

Ramin Assa, Project Manager, Section 1  
Project Directorate II  
Division of Licensing Project Management  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket Nos. 50-424 and 50-425

Enclosures:

1. Amendment No. 123 to NPF-68
2. Amendment No. 101 to NPF-81
3. Safety Evaluation

cc w/encls: See next page

Mr. J. B. Beasley, Jr.  
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A copy of the related Safety Evaluation is also enclosed. A Notice of Issuance will be included in the Commission's biweekly *Federal Register* notice.

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\*See Previous Concurrence

OFFICE	CLIIP/LPM*	PDII-1/PM	PDII-1/LA	PDII-1/SC(A)
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DATE	9/13/01	11/07/01	11/07/01	11/08/01

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SOUTHERN NUCLEAR OPERATING COMPANY, INC.

GEORGIA POWER COMPANY

OGLETHORPE POWER CORPORATION

MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC AUTHORITY OF GEORGIA

CITY OF DALTON, GEORGIA

VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNIT 1

AMENDMENT TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE

Amendment No. 123  
License No. NPF-68

1. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) has found that:
  - A. The application for amendment to the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Unit 1 (the facility) Facility Operating License No. NPF-68 filed by the Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (the licensee), acting for itself, Georgia Power Company, Oglethorpe Power Corporation, Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia, and City of Dalton, Georgia (the owners), dated August 16, 2001, complies with the standards and requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's rules and regulations as 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 set forth in 10 CFR Chapter I;
  - 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 hereby amended by page changes to the Technical Specifications as indicated in the attachment to this license amendment, and paragraph 2.C.(2) of Facility Operating License No. NPF-68 is hereby amended to read as follows:

Technical Specifications and Environmental Protection Plan

The Technical Specifications contained in Appendix A, as revised through Amendment No. 123, and the Environmental Protection Plan contained in Appendix B, both of which are attached hereto, are hereby incorporated into this license. Southern Nuclear shall operate the facility in accordance with the Technical Specifications and the Environmental Protection Plan.

3. This license amendment is effective as of its date of issuance and shall be implemented on or before June 28, 2002.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

*/RA/*

Richard J. Laufer, Acting Chief, Section 1  
Project Directorate II  
Division of Licensing Project Management  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Attachment:  
Technical Specification  
Changes

Date of Issuance: November 13, 2001

SOUTHERN NUCLEAR OPERATING COMPANY, INC.

GEORGIA POWER COMPANY

OGLETHORPE POWER CORPORATION

MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC AUTHORITY OF GEORGIA

CITY OF DALTON, GEORGIA

VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNIT 2

AMENDMENT TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE

Amendment No. 101  
License No. NPF-81

1. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) has found that:
  - A. The application for amendment to the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Unit 2 (the facility) Facility Operating License No. NPF-81 filed by the Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (the licensee), acting for itself, Georgia Power Company Oglethorpe Power Corporation, Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia, and City of Dalton, Georgia (the owners), dated August 16, 2001, complies with the standards and requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's rules and regulations as 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 set forth in 10 CFR Chapter I;
  - 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 hereby amended by page changes to the Technical Specifications as indicated in the attachment to this license amendment, and paragraph 2.C.(2) of Facility Operating License No. NPF-81 is hereby amended to read as follows:

Technical Specifications and Environmental Protection Plan

The Technical Specifications contained in Appendix A, as revised through Amendment No. 101, and the Environmental Protection Plan contained in Appendix B, both of which are attached hereto, are hereby incorporated into this license. Southern Nuclear shall operate the facility in accordance with the Technical Specifications and the Environmental Protection Plan.

3. This license amendment is effective as of its date of issuance and shall be implemented on or before June 28, 2002.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

*/RA/*

Richard J. Laufer, Acting Chief, Section 1  
Project Directorate II  
Division of Licensing Project Management  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Attachment:  
Technical Specification  
Changes

Date of Issuance: November 13, 2001

ATTACHMENT TO LICENSE AMENDMENT NO. 123

FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NO. NPF-68

DOCKET NO. 50-424

AND

TO LICENSE AMENDMENT NO. 101

FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NO. NPF-81

DOCKET NO. 50-425

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.

Remove

5.5-2  
5.5-3  
B 3.3.3-17

Insert

5.5-2  
5.5-3  
B 3.3.3-17

SAFETY EVALUATION BY THE OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION  
RELATED TO AMENDMENT NO. 123 TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NPF-68  
AND AMENDMENT NO. 101 TO FACILITY OPERATING LICENSE NPF-81  
SOUTHERN NUCLEAR OPERATING COMPANY, INC., ET AL.  
VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT, UNITS 1 AND 2  
DOCKET NOS. 50-424 AND 50-425

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

By letter dated August 16, 2001, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc., et al. (the licensee) proposed license amendments to change the Technical Specifications (TS) for the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (Vogtle), Units 1 and 2. The proposed changes would delete TS Section 5.5.3, "Post Accident Sampling," for Vogtle Units 1 and 2, and thereby eliminate the requirements to have and maintain the post-accident sampling system (PASS). The proposed changes also revise TS 5.5.2, "Primary Coolant Sources Outside Containment," to reflect the elimination of PASS.

In the aftermath of the accident at Three Mile Island (TMI), Unit 2, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) imposed requirements on licensees for commercial nuclear power plants to install and maintain the capability to obtain and analyze post-accident samples of the reactor coolant and containment atmosphere. The desired capabilities for PASS were described in NUREG-0737, "Clarification of TMI Action Plan Requirements." The NRC issued orders to licensees with plants operating at the time of the TMI accident to confirm the installation of PASS capabilities (generally as they had been described in NUREG-0737). A requirement for PASS and related administrative controls was added to the TSs of the operating plants and was included in the initial TS for plants licensed during the 1980s and 1990s. Additional expectations regarding PASS capabilities were included in Regulatory Guide 1.97, "Instrumentation for Light-Water-Cooled Nuclear Power Plants To Assess Plant and Environs Conditions During and Following an Accident."

Significant improvements have been achieved since the TMI accident in the areas of understanding risks associated with nuclear plant operations and developing better strategies for managing the response to potentially severe accidents at nuclear plants. Recent insights about plant risks and alternate severe accident assessment tools have led the NRC staff to conclude that some TMI Action Plan items can be revised without reducing the ability of licensees to respond to severe accidents. The NRC's efforts to oversee the risks associated with nuclear technology more effectively and to eliminate undue regulatory costs to licensees have prompted the NRC to consider eliminating the requirements for PASS in TS and other parts of the licensing bases of operating reactors.

The staff has completed its review of the topical reports submitted by the Combustion Engineering Owners Group (CEOG) and the Westinghouse Owners Group (WOG) that

proposed the elimination of PASS. The justifications for the proposed elimination of PASS requirements center on evaluations of the various radiological and chemical sampling and their potential usefulness in responding to a severe reactor accident or making decisions regarding actions to protect the public from possible releases of radioactive materials. As explained in more detail in the staff's Safety Evaluations (SE) for the two topical reports, the staff has reviewed the available sources of information for use by decision-makers in developing protective action recommendations and assessing core damage. Based on this review, the staff found that the information provided by PASS is either unnecessary or is effectively provided by other indications of process parameters or measurement of radiation levels. The staff agrees, therefore, with the owners groups that licensees can remove the TS requirements for PASS, revise (as necessary) other elements of the licensing bases, and pursue possible design changes to alter or remove existing PASS equipment.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

In a letter dated May 5, 1999 (as supplemented by letter dated April 14, 2000), the CEOG submitted Topical Report CE NPSD-1157, Revision 1, "Technical Justification for the Elimination of the Post-Accident Sampling System From the Plant Design and Licensing Bases for CEOG Utilities." A similar proposal was submitted on October 26, 1998 (as supplemented by letters dated April 28, 1999, April 10 and May 22, 2000), by the WOG in its Topical Report WCAP-14986, "Post Accident Sampling System Requirements: A Technical Basis." The reports provided evaluations of the information obtained from PASS samples to determine the contribution of the information to plant safety and accident recovery. The reports considered the progression and consequences of core damage accidents and assessed the accident progression with respect to plant abnormal and emergency operating procedures, severe accident management guidance, and emergency plans. The reports provided the owners groups' technical justifications for the elimination for the various PASS sampling requirements. The specific samples and the staff's findings are described in the following evaluation.

The NRC staff prepared this model SE relating to the elimination of requirements on post accident sampling and solicited public comment (65 FR 49271) in accordance with the consolidated line item improvement process (CLIIP). The use of the CLIIP in this matter is intended to help the NRC to efficiently process amendments that propose to remove the PASS requirements from TS. Licensees of nuclear power reactors to which this model apply were informed (65 FR 65018) that they could request amendments confirming the applicability of the SE to their reactors and providing the requested plant-specific verifications and commitments.

## 3.0 EVALUATION

The technical evaluations for the elimination of PASS sampling requirements are provided in the SEs dated May 16, 2000, for the CEOG topical report CE NPSD-1157 and June 14, 2000, for the WOG topical report WCAP-14986. The NRC staff's SEs approving the topical reports are located in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) (Accession Numbers ML003715250 for CE NPSD-1157 and ML003723268 for WCAP-14986).

The ways in which the requirements and recommendations for PASS were incorporated into the licensing bases of commercial nuclear power plants varied as a function of when plants were

licensed. Plants that were operating at the time of the TMI accident are likely to have been the subject of confirmatory orders that imposed the PASS functions described in NUREG-0737 as obligations. The issuance of plant specific amendments to adopt this change, which would remove PASS and related administrative controls from TS, supersede the PASS specific requirements imposed by post-TMI confirmatory orders.

As described in its SEs for the topical reports, the staff finds that the following PASS sampling requirements may be eliminated for plants of Combustion Engineering and Westinghouse designs:

1. reactor coolant dissolved gases
2. reactor coolant hydrogen
3. reactor coolant oxygen
4. reactor coolant pH
5. reactor coolant chlorides
6. reactor coolant boron
7. reactor coolant conductivity
8. reactor coolant radionuclides
9. containment atmosphere hydrogen concentration
10. containment oxygen
11. containment atmosphere radionuclides
12. containment sump pH
13. containment sump chlorides
14. containment sump boron
15. containment sump radionuclides

The staff agrees that sampling of radionuclides is not required to support emergency response decision-making during the initial phases of an accident because the information provided by PASS is either unnecessary or is effectively provided by other indications of process parameters or measurement of radiation levels. Therefore, it is not necessary to have dedicated equipment to obtain this sample in a prompt manner.

The staff does, however, believe that there could be significant benefits to having information about the radionuclides existing post-accident in order to address public concerns and plan for long-term recovery operations. As stated in the SEs for the topical reports, the staff has found that licensees could satisfy this function by developing contingency plans to describe existing sampling capabilities and what actions (e.g., assembling temporary shielding) may be necessary to obtain and analyze highly radioactive samples from the reactor coolant system (RCS), containment sump, and containment atmosphere. (See item 4.1 under Licensee Verifications and Commitments). These contingency plans must be available to be used by a licensee during an accident; however, these contingency plans do not have to be carried out in emergency plan drills or exercises. The contingency plans for obtaining samples from the RCS, containment sump, and containment atmosphere may also enable a licensee to derive information on parameters such as hydrogen concentrations in containment and boron concentration and pH of water in the containment sump. The staff considers the sampling of the containment sump to be potentially useful in confirming calculations of pH and boron concentrations and confirming that potentially unaccounted for acid sources have been

sufficiently neutralized. The use of the contingency plans for obtaining samples would depend on the plant conditions and the need for information by the decision-makers responsible for responding to the accident.

In addition, the staff considers radionuclide sampling information to be useful in classifying certain types of events (such as a reactivity excursion or mechanical damage) that could cause fuel damage without having an indication of overheating on core exit thermocouples. However, the staff agrees with the topical reports' contentions that other indicators of failed fuel, such as letdown radiation monitors (or normal sampling system), can be correlated to the degree of failed fuel. (See item 4.2 under Licensee Verifications and Commitments).

In lieu of the information that would have been obtained from PASS, the staff believes that licensees should maintain or develop the capability to monitor radioactive iodines that have been released to offsite environs. Although this capability may not be needed to support the immediate protective action recommendations during an accident, the information would be useful for decision-makers trying to limit the public's ingestion of radioactive materials. (See item 4.3 under Licensee Verifications and Commitments.)

The staff believes that the changes related to the elimination of PASS that are described in the topical reports, related SEs and this proposed change to TS are unlikely to result in a decrease in the effectiveness of a licensee's emergency plan. Each licensee, however, must evaluate possible changes to its emergency plan in accordance with 10 CFR 50.54(q) to determine if the change decreases the effectiveness of its site-specific plan. Evaluations and reporting of changes to emergency plans should be performed in accordance with applicable regulations and procedures.

The staff notes that redundant, safety-grade, containment hydrogen concentration monitors are required by 10 CFR 50.44(b)(1), are addressed in NUREG-0737 Item II.F.1 and Regulatory Guide 1.97, and are relied upon to meet the data reporting requirements of 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix E, Section VI.2.a.(i)(4). The staff concludes that during the early phases of an accident, the safety-grade hydrogen monitors provide an adequate capability for monitoring containment hydrogen concentration. The staff sees value in maintaining the capability to obtain grab samples for complementing the information from the hydrogen monitors in the long term (i.e., by confirming the indications from the monitors and providing hydrogen measurements for concentrations outside the range of the monitors). As previously mentioned, the licensee's contingency plan (see item 4.1 under Licensee Verifications and Commitments) for obtaining highly radioactive samples will include sampling of the containment atmosphere and may, if deemed necessary and practical by the appropriate decision-makers, be used to supplement the safety-related hydrogen monitors.

The TS include an administrative requirement for a program to minimize to levels as low as practicable the leakage from those portions of systems outside containment that could contain highly radioactive fluids during a serious transient or accident. The program includes preventive maintenance, periodic inspections, and leak tests for the identified systems. The Post Accident Processing System (Vogtle-specific system designation for PASS) is specifically listed in TS 5.5.2 as falling under the scope of this requirement. The applicability of this

specification depends on whether or not the Post Accident Processing System is maintained as a system that is a potential leakage path.

The licensee has stated that a plant change may be implemented such that PASS would not be a potential leakage path outside containment for highly radioactive fluids. The modification might not, however, be made during the implementation period for this amendment. The licensee has proposed to add the following phrase to the reference to the Post Accident Processing System in TS 5.5.2:

"(until such time as a modification eliminates the Post Accident Processing System as a potential leakage path)."

The above phrase makes clear that TS 5.5.2 remains applicable to the Post Accident Processing System as long as it is a possible leakage path and reflects that the actual modification of the piping system may be scheduled beyond the implementation period for this amendment. Requirements in NRC regulations (e.g., 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix J) and other TS provide adequate regulatory controls over the licensee's modification to eliminate the Post Accident Processing System as a potential leakage path. Following the modification to eliminate the Post Accident Processing System as a potential leakage path, the licensee may elect (in order to maintain clarity and simplicity of the requirement) to revise TS 5.5.2 to remove the reference to the system, including the phrase added by this amendment.

The elimination of PASS affects the discussion in the Bases section for TS 3.3.3, "PAM [Post Accident Monitoring] Instrumentation." The current Bases mention the capabilities of PASS as a backup for monitoring hydrogen concentration within containment. Although the licensee's application included possible wording for the revised Bases discussion for TS 3.3.3, the licensee will formally address the change to the Bases in accordance with the TS Bases Control Program described in TS 5.5.14.

#### 4.0 VERIFICATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

As requested by the staff in the notice of availability for this TS improvement, the licensee has addressed the following plant-specific verifications and commitments.

- 4.1 Each licensee should verify that it has, and make a regulatory commitment to maintain (or make a regulatory commitment to develop and maintain), contingency plans for obtaining and analyzing highly radioactive samples of reactor coolant, containment sump, and containment atmosphere.

The licensee has developed contingency plans for obtaining and analyzing highly radioactive samples of reactor coolant, containment sump, and containment atmosphere. A description of the contingency plans will be contained in the Vogtle Emergency Plan. The licensee will implement this commitment on or before June 28, 2002.

- 4.2 Each licensee should verify that it has, and make a regulatory commitment to maintain (or make a regulatory commitment to develop and maintain), a capability for classifying fuel damage events at the Alert level threshold (typically this is 300  $\mu\text{Ci/ml}$  dose equivalent

iodine). This capability may utilize the normal sampling system and/or correlations of sampling or letdown line dose rates to coolant concentrations.

The licensee has developed a capability for classifying fuel damage events at the Alert level threshold. The capability for the Alert classification will be described in emergency plan implementing procedures. The licensee will implement this commitment on or before June 28, 2002.

- 4.3 Each licensee should verify that it has, and make a regulatory commitment to maintain (or make a regulatory commitment to develop and maintain), the capability to monitor radioactive iodines that have been released to offsite environs.

The licensee has established the capability to monitor radioactive iodines that have been released to offsite environs. The capability is described in the licensee's emergency plan implementing procedures. The licensee has implemented this commitment.

The NRC staff finds that reasonable controls for the implementation and for subsequent evaluation of proposed changes pertaining to the above regulatory commitments are provided by the licensee's administrative processes, including its commitment management program. Should the licensee choose to incorporate a regulatory commitment into the emergency plan, final safety analysis report, or other document with established regulatory controls, the associated regulations would define the appropriate change-control and reporting requirements. The staff has determined that the commitments do not warrant the creation of regulatory requirements which would require prior NRC approval of subsequent changes. The NRC staff has agreed that NEI 99-04, Revision 0, "Guidelines for Managing NRC Commitment Changes," provides reasonable guidance for the control of regulatory commitments made to the NRC staff. (See Regulatory Issue Summary 2000-17, Managing Regulatory Commitments Made by Power Reactor Licensees to the NRC Staff, dated September 21, 2000.) The commitments should be controlled in accordance with the industry guidance or comparable criteria employed by a specific licensee. The staff may choose to verify the implementation and maintenance of these commitments in a future inspection or audit.

## 5.0 STATE CONSULTATION

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

## 6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION

The amendments change requirements with respect to installation or use of a facility component located within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR Part 20 and change surveillance requirements. The NRC staff has determined that the amendments involve no significant increase in the 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 amendments involve no significant hazards consideration, and there has been no public comment on such finding (66 FR 50472). Accordingly, the amendments meet 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 amendments.

## 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 amendments will not be inimical to the common defense and security or to the health and safety of the public.

Principal Contributor: W. Reckley

Date: November 13, 2001

## Vogtle Electric Generating Plant

cc:

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