



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES LICENSE FOR HUMBOLDT BAY INDEPENDENT SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL STORAGE INSTALLATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a license to the Pacific Gas and Electric Co. (PG&E) to operate an independent spent nuclear fuel storage installation at its Humboldt Bay power plant site in Humboldt County, California. The license is effective for 20 years and may be renewed, subject to additional NRC review and approval.

PG&E intends to transfer all the remaining used nuclear reactor fuel from the Humboldt Bay Unit 3 spent fuel pool into dry casks. The new spent fuel storage installation will provide sufficient interim spent fuel storage capacity to support the continued decommissioning and dismantlement of the Humboldt Bay Unit 3 reactor, which has been permanently shut down since 1976.

The installation will employ a customized version of the HI-STAR 100 dry cask storage system, designed by Holtec International, Inc., and previously approved by the NRC. The specific system to be used at Humboldt Bay consists of a steel canister that can hold up to 80 spent fuel assemblies and a steel “overpack” or cask, which holds the canister and provides additional shielding against radiation during transfer and storage at the site. The Humboldt Bay installation can accommodate five spent fuel storage casks containing up to 400 spent fuel assemblies, and one additional cask to store other radioactive material. The six loaded casks will be placed in an in-ground concrete vault.

The agency has also issued a Safety Evaluation Report for the proposed spent fuel storage installation, which summarizes the NRC staff’s extensive safety review of PG&E’s detailed analyses of the facility. These analyses include the evaluation of potential effects on the installation from a wide range of natural and man-made hazards, such as flooding, lightning, fire, earthquakes, and explosions. The report describes the NRC staff’s conclusions that the storage installation proposed by PG&E conforms with statutory and regulatory requirements and will provide adequate protection of public health and safety, and the environment.

PG&E applied for the license in December 2003. In addition to the safety review and an environmental assessment by the NRC staff, the agency offered an opportunity for interested persons to request a formal adjudicatory hearing on the application; however, a hearing was not requested.

The Humboldt Bay independent spent fuel storage installation license, technical specifications, and Safety Evaluation Report will be available through the NRC’s ADAMS document management

system on the Web at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> (see accession number ML053140041). For assistance in using ADAMS, contact the agency's Public Document Room at 301-415-4737 or 1-800-397-4209.

Dry cask storage is a proven technology, first used for commercial spent fuel in the U.S. in 1986. It is currently in use at 36 sites around the country. Dry cask storage systems incorporate passive design features so that safe operation does not rely on moving parts or active components. For more information about dry-cask storage of spent nuclear fuel, see the NRC's fact sheet, at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/dry-cask-storage.html> .

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