

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 52-025 and 52-026; NRC-2008-0252]

Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc.,

Vogtle Electric Generating Plant, Units 3 and 4

CA04 Structural Module ITAAC Dimensions Change

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Exemption and combined license amendment; issuance.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is granting an exemption to allow a departure from the certification information of Tier 1 of the generic design control document (DCD) and issuing License Amendment No. 42 to Combined Licenses (COL), NPF-91 and NPF-92. The COLs were issued to Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (SNC), Georgia Power Company, Oglethorpe Power Corporation, MEAG Power SPVM, LLC., MEAG Power SPVJ, LLC., MEAG Power SPVP, LLC., and the City of Dalton, Georgia (together “the licensees”), for construction and operation of Vogtle Electric Generating Plant (VEGP), Units 3 and 4, located in Burke County, Georgia.

The granting of the exemption allows the changes to Tier 1 information requested in the amendment. Because the acceptability of the exemption was determined in part by the acceptability of the amendment, the exemption and amendment are being issued concurrently.

DATES: January 24, 2017

ADDRESSES: Please refer to Docket ID **NRC-2008-0252** when contacting the NRC about the availability of information regarding this document. You may obtain publicly-available information related to this document using any of the following methods:

- **Federal Rulemaking Web site:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket ID **NRC-2008-0252**. Address questions about NRC dockets to Carol Gallagher; telephone: 301-415-3463; e-mail: Carol.Gallagher@nrc.gov. For technical questions, contact the individual listed in the FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT section of this document.

- **NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS):** You may obtain publicly-available documents online in the ADAMS Public Documents collection at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. To begin the search, select "ADAMS Public Documents" and then select "Begin Web-based ADAMS Search." For problems with ADAMS, please contact the NRC's Public Document Room (PDR) reference staff at 1-800-397-4209, 301-415-4737, or by e-mail to pdr.resource@nrc.gov. The ADAMS accession number for each document referenced (if it is available in ADAMS) is provided the first time that a document is referenced. The request for the amendment and exemption was submitted by the letter dated September 18, 2015 (ADAMS Accession No. ML15261A757).

- **NRC's PDR:** You may examine and purchase copies of public documents at the NRC's PDR, Room O1-F21, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chandu Patel, Office of New Reactors, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001; telephone: 301-415-3025; e-mail: Chandu.Patel@nrc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction

The NRC is granting an exemption from Tier 1 information in the certified DCD incorporated by reference in part 52 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), appendix D, "Design Certification Rule for the AP1000 Design," and issuing License Amendment No. 42 to COLs, NPF-91 and NPF-92, to the licensee. The exemption is required by Paragraph A.4 of Section VIII, "Processes for Changes and Departures," appendix D to 10 CFR part 52 to allow the licensee to depart from Tier 1 information. With the requested amendment, the licensee sought proposed changes related to the design details of the containment internal structural wall modules (CA04, CA01, and CB65). The proposed changes to Tier 2 information in the VEGP Units 3 and 4 Updated Final Safety Analysis Report (UFSAR), plant-specific Tier 1 information, and corresponding COL Appendix C information would allow an increase of the concrete wall thickness tolerances. The proposed changes would allow:

(1) a change to Tier 2 information in UFSAR Subsection 3.8.3.6.1, "Fabrication, Erection, and Construction of Structural Modules," to allow an increase in wall thickness tolerance beyond the American Concrete Institute (ACI) 117, "Standard Specifications for Tolerance for Concrete Construction and Material," specified tolerance for some Containment Internal Structure (CIS) walls, and

(2) the addition of Note 10 to Tier 1 Table 3.3-1, which provides the wall thickness tolerance deviations.

Part of the justification for granting the exemption was provided by the review of the amendment. Because the exemption is necessary in order to issue the requested license amendment, the NRC granted the exemption and issued the amendment concurrently, rather than in sequence. This included issuing a combined safety evaluation containing the NRC staff's review of both the exemption request and the license amendment. The exemption met all

applicable regulatory criteria set forth in 10 CFR 50.12, 10 CFR 52.7, and 10 CFR 52.63(b)(1). The license amendment was found to be acceptable as well. The combined safety evaluation is available in ADAMS under Accession No. ML15302A473.

Identical exemption documents (except for referenced unit numbers and license numbers) were issued to the licensee for VEGP Units 3 and 4 (COLs NPF-91 and NPF-92). These documents are available in ADAMS under Accession Nos. ML15302A418 and ML15302A443, respectively. The exemption is reproduced (with the exception of abbreviated titles and additional citations) in Section II of this document. The amendment documents for COLs NPF-91 and NPF-92 are available in ADAMS under Accession Nos. ML15302A406 and ML15302A413, respectively. A summary of the amendment documents is provided in Section III of this document.

II. Exemption

Reproduced below is the exemption document issued to VEGP, Units 3 and 4. It makes reference to the combined safety evaluation that provides the reasoning for the findings made by the NRC (and listed under Item 1) in order to grant the exemption:

1. In a letter dated September 18, 2015, Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc. (licensee) requested from the NRC an exemption to allow departures from Tier 1 information in the certified Design Control Document (DCD) incorporated by reference in 10 CFR part 52, appendix D, "Design Certification Rule for the AP1000 Design," as part of license amendment request (LAR) 15-015, "CA04 Structural Module Inspection, Test, Analysis, and Acceptance Criteria Dimensions Change."

For the reasons set forth in Section 3.1 of the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation, which can be found in ADAMS under Accession No. ML15302A473, the Commission finds that:

- A. the exemption is authorized by law;
- B. the exemption presents no undue risk to public health and safety;

- C. the exemption is consistent with the common defense and security;
- D. special circumstances are present in that the application of the rule in this circumstance is not necessary to serve the underlying purpose of the rule;
- E. the special circumstances outweigh any decrease in safety that may result from the reduction in standardization caused by the exemption, and
- F. the exemption will not result in a significant decrease in the level of safety otherwise provided by the design.

2. Accordingly, the licensee is granted an exemption from the certified DCD Tier 1 Table: 3.3-1, as described in the licensee's request dated September 18, 2015. This exemption is related to, and necessary for the granting of License Amendment No. 42, which is being issued concurrently with this exemption.

3. As explained in Section 5.0 of the NRC staff's Safety Evaluation (ADAMS Accession No. ML15302A473), this exemption meets the eligibility criteria for categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9). Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment needs to be prepared in connection with the issuance of the exemption.

4. This exemption is effective as of the date of its issuance.

III. License Amendment Request

The request for the amendment and exemption was submitted by the letter dated September 18, 2015. The proposed amendment is described in Section I, above.

The Commission has determined for these amendments that the application complies with the standards and requirements of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's rules and regulations. The Commission has made appropriate findings as required by the Act and the Commission's rules and regulations in 10 CFR chapter I, which are set forth in the license amendment.

A notice of consideration of issuance of amendment to facility operating license or combined license, as applicable, proposed no significant hazards consideration determination, and opportunity for a hearing in connection with these actions, was published in the *Federal Register* on October 8, 2015 (80 FR 60937). Comments were received during the 30-day comment period.

IV. Public Comments

On November 9, 2015, the staff received a public comment from the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and its Chapter Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff (BREDL), regarding the proposed amendment request for the VEGP, Units 3 and 4. This document can be found in ADAMS under Accession No. ML15320A016. On December 7, 2015, BREDL filed its Petition and on December 23, 2015, BREDL filed a corrected petition (ADAMS Accession Nos. ML15341A348 and ML15357A000, respectively). On January 4, 2016, NRC and SNC filed their respective answers to the Petition for Leave to Intervene and Request for Hearing (ADAMS Accession Nos. ML16004A471 and ML16004A479, respectively). The Atomic Safety and Licensing Board issued a ruling on the VEGP Units 3 and 4 license amendment request contention admissibility proceeding on April 29, 2016. This document can be found in ADAMS under Accession No. ML16120A508.

The NRC staff has found that the amendment involves no significant hazards consideration. The Commission has determined that these amendments satisfy the criteria for

categorical exclusion in accordance with 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9). Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared for these amendments.

V. Conclusion

Using the reasons set forth in the combined safety evaluation, the staff granted the exemption and issued the amendment that the licensee requested on September 18, 2015. The exemption and amendment were issued on December 16, 2015, as part of a combined package to the licensee (ADAMS Accession No. ML15302A398).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 12th day of January 2017.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

/RA/

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