

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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In the Matter of)

VIRGINIA ELECTRIC AND POWER)
COMPANY)

(North Anna Power Station,)
Units 1 and 2))

(Proposed Amendments to Operating)
License to Allow Receipt and Storage)
of 500 Spent Fuel Assemblies from)
Surry Power Station, Units 1 and 2,)
and Expansion of Spent Fuel Pool)
Storage Capacity))

Docket Nos. 50-338/339
OLA-1 and OLA-2

COUNTY OF LOUISA, VIRGINIA, AND THE BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF LOUISA, VIRGINIA
REPLY MEMORANDUM IN RESPONSE TO BOARD ORDER

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REPLY MEMORANDUM IN RESPONSE TO BOARD ORDER

The County of Louisa, Virginia, and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Louisa, Virginia ("the County") herewith submits its reply brief on the questions posed by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board ("the Board") at the February 16, 1983 special prehearing conference and initially briefed by the parties, the County, Virginia Electric and Power Company ("Vepco" or "the applicant"), the Concerned Citizens of Louisa County ("Concerned Citizens"), and the Staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission ("NRC" or "the Commission") in papers filed April 1, 1983. The issues presented are:

1. Whether the Board may consider in this proceeding the health, safety and environmental impacts of transshipment of spent fuel from Surry to North Anna.
2. Whether alternatives to the proposed action must be considered under Section 102(2)(E) of the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"), 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(E), even if it is ultimately determined that an environmental impact statement ("EIS") is not required.

I. THIS BOARD MUST CONSIDER TRANSSHIPMENT.

As discussed in the County's initial brief,^{1/} this Board has the power and the obligation to consider the transshipment element of Vepco's proposed scheme. Transshipment, as a necessary concomitant of Vepco's proposal to ship and store Surry fuel at North Anna, is an issue "fairly raised" by Vepco's proposed license amendments. Commonwealth Edison (Zion Station, Units 1 and 2), ALAB-616, 12 NRC 419, 426 (1980). Therefore, the Board does have jurisdiction to consider the planned Surry-to-North Anna shipments. Duke Power Co. (Cabawba Nuclear Station), Docket Nos. 50-413, -414, Memorandum and Order at 6 (July 8, 1982). Moreover, since transshipment will likely effect a change in the environmental and health and safety status quo, this Board must

^{1/} County of Louisa, Virginia, and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Louisa, Virginia Memorandum in Response to Board Order at 3-13 [hereinafter County Mem.].

exercise its jurisdiction and consider the environmental and health and safety consequences of transshipment. Id.; Consumers Power Company (Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant), ALAB-636, 13 NRC 312, 326. To ignore the transshipment component of Vepco's plan would violate the NEPA mandate to consider proposed actions comprehensively, City of Rochester v. United States Postal Service, 541 F.2d 967, 972 (2d Cir. 1976), the Commission regulations requiring consideration of the "probable impacts" of a proposed action, 10 C.F.R. § 51.7(b), the Board's own obligation to ensure compliance with NEPA, 10 C.F.R. § 50.40, the binding Council on Environmental Quality ("CEQ") regulations that require agencies to address the cumulative impacts of proposed actions, 40 C.F.R. § 1508.7 and § 1508.27(b)(7), and the Administrative Procedure Act requirement that agency decisions be made in accordance with the law, 5 U.S.C. § 706(2)(A). Moreover, since neither Vepco nor the Staff can point to any other forum in which the health and safety implications of transshipment will be addressed, this Board must consider the health and safety issues, else it will be unable to make the health and safety finding required by Sections 50.57(a)(3) and 50.40(c) of the Commission's regulations.

Vepco's only response on the environmental aspect of this issue is to assert that the environmental impacts of the proposed transshipments were already considered at the Surry operating license stage. As discussed more fully in the County's initial

brief on this subject,^{2/} the Surry Final Environmental Statement ("FES") dealt only with the radiological impacts of one-time, direct shipments from Surry to Barnwell, South Carolina. Here, Vepco is proposing to make an intermediate stop at North Anna, presumably later to ship the spent fuel accumulated there to a federal repository for permanent disposal, the location of which is yet to be determined. This new shipment scheme introduces new elements into the environmental cost-benefit balance struck at the Surry operating license stage. Different trucks loaded with different casks will be moving along different routes with different population densities to a different terminus.^{3/}

2/ County Mem. at 9-13.

3/ Vepco and the Staff make far too much of a recent Licensing Board order in the Catawba operating license proceedings. Duke Power Co. (Catawba Nuclear Station), Memorandum and Order (February 25, 1983). In an earlier order in that proceeding, the Board held that it did indeed have jurisdiction to consider the environmental impacts of spent fuel transshipment to, and storage at, Catawba. Duke Power Co. (Catawba Nuclear Station), Memorandum and Order (July 8, 1982) at 6. All that the recent order adds is that the intervenors' contentions in that case were not sufficiently specific at that point in the case to establish that the proposed transshipment would effect a change in the environmental cost-benefit balance struck at the operating license stage of the shipping reactors. In so ruling, however, the Catawba Board stressed that "there could be some incremental environmental impacts associated with the transshipment phase that are not accounted for in the earlier environmental reviews," Memorandum and Order (February 25, 1983) at 7, and indicated the intervenors could file a Section 2.758 petition to bring these matters to the attention of the Board. The instant case, unlike Catawba, involves a license amendment to permit receipt and storage, and the County and the Concerned Citizens group have established that the proposed amendment will effect a change in the environmental status quo. Thus, the Catawba Board's rejection of the contentions proffered in that case is hardly persuasive that this Board lacks jurisdiction over the transshipment issues.

Moreover, the assumptions on which the FES based its conclusion that Surry spent fuel could be shipped safely have long since been rejected by the NRC. For example, the Surry FES states that transport safety will be assured by a combination of "limitations on the contents . . . , the package design, and the external radiation levels," and that therefore special routing is not required.^{4/} In the preamble to the 1980 amendments to Part 73 of the NRC regulations,^{5/} however, the Commission stated that package design is not sufficient to protect public health and safety and that therefore the Commission was adopting routing restrictions and stringent security requirements.

Another distinction that argues against exclusive reliance on the Surry FES is that that document addressed only radiological consequences. The "probable impacts" of Surry-to-North Anna shipments are not, however, exclusively radiological. The myriad environmental consequences that will flow from the planned Surry-to-North Anna shipments (e.g., effects on land use patterns, the County's ability to attract non-nuclear industry) have already been discussed,^{6/} and it is unnecessary to repeat that discussion here. Suffice it to say that these environmental impacts were not considered in the Surry FES; nor are they assessed in the context of Table S-4. In fact, as the Federal

^{4/} Final Environmental Statement, Surry Power Station Unit 1, (May 1972) at 129.

^{5/} 45 Fed. Reg. 37399, 37403 (June 3, 1980).

^{6/} County Mem. at 10-11.

Register notice accompanying Table S-4 makes clear,^{7/} the Table was not intended by the Commission to be the exclusive expression of environmental impacts associated with transshipment.^{8/}

Although denominated "environmental," the FES and Table S-4 address only radiological impacts. Thus, the Board should reject Vepco's and the Staff's argument that consideration now of never-before-considered environmental impacts would somehow "replow" ground already covered at the Surry operating license stage.^{9/}

As to the health and safety aspects of transshipment, neither the Staff nor Vepco can point to any other forum, or indeed any other Commission mechanism, in which these issues will be addressed. Given the Commission's overriding responsibility to protect the public health and safety and this Board's own obligation, under 10 C.F.R. § 50.57(a)(3)(i), to find "reasonable assurance that the activities authorized [by the Board's grant of a license] can be conducted without endangering the health and safety of the public," this Board must consider the health and safety implications of Vepco's proposed transshipment plan unless it is certain that these issues will be covered elsewhere under

^{7/} 40 Fed. Reg. 1005, 1007, 1008 (January 6, 1975).

^{8/} See County Mem. at 11-12 and note 10, infra.

^{9/} In any event, Louisa County did not participate in the Surry licensing proceedings; indeed, it had no reason to do so. To now narrowly circumscribe the scope of the instant proceedings so as to preclude consideration of the environmental impacts of the Surry-to-North Anna shipment would be to deny Louisa County's right, under due process principles and Section 189 of the Atomic Energy Act, to be heard on an issue by which it will certainly be affected.

the Commission's regulatory scheme. Since there is no such certainty, indeed, no possibility that transshipment will be evaluated elsewhere, the Board must address these important health and safety questions here.

It is true that existing Commission regulations specify packaging requirements (Part 71) and physical protection requirements (Part 73), but nowhere in the Commission regulations or case law is it suggested that these regulations cover the universe of health and safety issues raised by Vepco's proposal to ship Surry spent fuel to North Anna. In fact, in the Federal Register notice accompanying the 1980 amendments to Part 73, the Commission noted a Sandia report that concluded that "serious public health consequences could result in the event of successful sabotage of a spent fuel shipment in a heavily populated area." Although subsequent studies predicted less serious consequences, the Commission concluded that "the reaction of spent fuel and spent fuel casks to explosive sabotage is subject to large uncertainty" and therefore further study was necessary.^{10/}

The Staff seems to think that transshipment-related health and safety issues are excluded from individual licensing actions by the Commission statement, in promulgating Part 73, that "the

^{10/} 45 Fed. Reg. at 37402. It is also worth noting that Table S-4, where some of the radiological effects of transshipment are expressed, specifically excludes treatment of "sabotage and diversion" and leaves achievement of the Part 20 ALARA standards to individual licensing actions. 40 Fed. Reg. at 1007, 1008.

Commission reaffirms its judgment that spent fuel can be shipped safely without constituting unreasonable risk to the health and safety of the public."^{11/} Such a judgment, however, does not obviate the need to address health and safety issues in individual licensing actions. Indeed, it may also be said that the Commission has made a judgment that nuclear power plants may be operated without constituting unreasonable risk to public health and safety; yet, Commission licensing procedures are designed to assure that individual facilities in fact will be operated safely.

Moreover, the Staff's insistence that Section 70.42(b)(5) somehow precludes Board consideration of the health and safety issues is unpersuasive. That section states:

[A]ny licensee may transfer special nuclear material . . . [t]o any person authorized to receive such special nuclear material under terms of a specific license or a general license or their equivalents issued by the Commission . . .

This section, however, which is a grant of a general license, does not bar consideration of health and safety. To the contrary, since the Commission does have an obligation to ensure that the activities it licenses will not endanger the public health and safety, this section can be said to represent a Commission judgment that shipment of special nuclear material to a person "authorized to receive" it will not endanger public health and safety. By making the general license to ship

^{11/} 45 Fed. Reg. at 37403.

dependent on the licensing status of the intended recipient, however, this section suggests that the Commission's health and safety inquiry is to be conducted in the context of proceedings to determine whether the intended recipient is "authorized to receive" special nuclear material.

This construction of the Commission's regulatory scheme makes sense, since the required determination of the safety of receipt and storage necessarily involves a judgment about the safety of the shipment that is integral to that plan. Since the precise issue before this Board is whether North Anna will be "authorized to receive," Section 70.42(b)(5) indicates that the health and safety aspects of transshipment are a proper concern of this Board. Thus, the existence of the general license does not control the scope of this proceeding; rather this proceeding controls whether Vepco will be able to avail itself of the general license.

Finally, to the extent Part 73 is intended to satisfy some of the Commission's health and safety obligations in evaluating transshipment plans, the Commission's handling of Vepco's route approval request raises serious questions whether those obligations were indeed satisfied in this particular case. NRC's approval of Vepco's proposed routes took a scant two weeks, generating an administrative record one page in length. In addition, although one of the stated purposes of the Commission's route approval requirement is to enable the Commission "to assure that [the licensee] has considered alternatives to the making of

the shipment," 45 Fed. Reg. at 37403, there is no evidence in the administrative record that such alternatives were considered either by Vepco or the Commission. This, too, raises serious doubts about the validity of the process there undertaken and whether this Board should rely on route approvals so obtained.

This Board may not grant Vepco's requested license amendments without first making an independent finding that the resulting activities will not endanger the public health and safety. 10 C.F.R. §§ 50.40 and 50.57. Given the facts that there is no other Commission forum in which to address these issues and that existing Commission regulations do not purport to cover all relevant health and safety issues, this Board must itself consider the health and safety issues posed by Vepco's transshipment plans. Otherwise, it will be without sufficient information to make the health and safety finding required by Sections 50.40 and 50.57.

II. SECTION 102(2)(E) OF NEPA REQUIRES THIS BOARD TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION.

As the County demonstrated in its initial brief on the alternatives question,^{12/} Section 102(2)(E) of NEPA imposes an independent obligation on federal agencies to study, develop and describe alternatives to a proposed action whenever the objectives of a proposed action may be achieved in one of two or more ways that will have differing impacts on the environment. In

^{12/} C.nty Mem. at 15-23.

Natural Resources Defense Council v. Callaway, 524 F.2d 79, 92-93 (2d Cir. 1975), the Second Circuit stressed the importance of addressing alternatives:

It is absolutely essential to the NEPA process that the decisionmaker be provided with a detailed and careful analysis of the relative environmental merits and demerits of the proposed action and possible alternatives, a requirement that we have characterized as "the linchpin of the entire impact statement," Monroe County Conservation Society, Inc. v. Volpe, 472 F.2d at 697-98. Indeed the development and discussion of a wide range of alternatives to any proposed federal action is so important that it is mandated by NEPA when any proposal "involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources, 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(D). This requirement is independent of and of wider scope than the duty to file the EIS.

(Emphasis added.)

This view of the NEPA obligation is supported by judicial decisions,^{13/} Commission decisions,^{14/} and the binding Council on Environmental Quality ("CEQ") regulations.^{15/} Despite this clear authority, Vepco argues that a proposed action must break through a "significance" threshold before the alternatives requirement

^{13/} See, e.g., Trinity Episcopal School Corp. v. Romney, 523 F.2d 88 (2d Cir. 1975); Environmental Defense Fund, Inc. v. Corps of Engineers, 492 F.2d 1123, 1135 (5th Cir. 1974).

^{14/} See, e.g., Consumers Power Co. (Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant), ALAB-636, 13 NRC at 332n.41; Virginia Electric and Power Co. (North Anna), ALAB-584, 11 NRC 451, 457 and n.12 (1980).

^{15/} 40 C.F.R. § 1508.9.

is triggered.^{16/} In so doing, Vepco begs the question by confusing the requirements of Section 102(2)(C), 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(C) (the EIS section of NEPA) with the requirements of Section 102(2)(E), 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(E) (the alternatives section). Under the express terms of the statute, the obligation to consider alternatives is triggered whenever a proposal "involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources." Contrary to Vepco's assertion, a project's "significance" is relevant under NEPA only in determining whether an EIS is required.

The staff, on the other hand, observes correctly that Section 102(2)(E) imposes an independent obligation^{17/} but suggests that the determination whether alternatives must be considered in this proceeding should be deferred until after the Staff has issued its environmental impact appraisal. Although this proceeding is still in its early stages, the record already establishes that Vepco's proposed action does involve "unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources." Indeed, this entire proceeding revolves around one specific conflict--viz., whether to use North Anna's limited storage capacity to store Surry fuel or to preserve that capacity for North Anna's spent fuel. In these circumstances, then, where the conflict is apparent on the face of the record, nothing is to be

^{16/} Applicant's Response to Questions Posed By The Licensing Board at 11-16.

^{17/} NRC Staff Brief On NEPA and Transshipment Issues at 7-10.

gained (in fact, time surely will be lost) by deferring the decision whether alternatives must be considered.

- A. Section 102(2)(E) Is Triggered, Regardless Of The Significance Of A Proposed Action, Whenever The Action Involves Unresolved Conflicts.

The NRC cases relied on by Vepco, in its futile effort to establish a "significance" threshold for Section 102(2)(E), refute the very point it seeks to make. In Portland General Electric Co. (Trojan Nuclear Plant), ALAB-531, 9 NRC 263, 266 (1979), the Appeal Board held that alternatives need not be considered only if a proposed action "will neither (1) entail more than negligible environmental impacts; nor (2) involve the commitment of available resources respecting which there are unresolved conflicts." (Emphasis added.) Similarly, the Appeal Board in Duke Power, ALAB-651, 14 NRC 307, 321-22 (1981), held that alternatives need not be considered where the proposed action will not "either harm the environment or bring into serious question the manner in which the country's resources are being expended." (Emphasis added.) Far from suggesting that alternatives must be assessed only where a proposed action has a more than negligible environmental impact and involves an unresolved conflict, these cases demonstrate that alternatives must be considered when either criterion is met. Moreover, a third case cited by Vepco, Virginia Electric and Power Co. (North Anna), ALAB-584, 11 NRC at 457-58, specifically distinguishes the NRC's Section 102(2)(C) obligations from its Section 102(2)(E) obligations, holding that under Section 102(2)(C), "alternatives

[must] be fully explored in an environmental impact statement whenever an agency contemplates a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment . . .

[whereas Section 102(2)(E)] is not expressly limited to major federal actions."

Read together, these cases simply restate the well-established NEPA principles that where the environmental impact is "more than negligible," an EIS including discussion of alternatives must be prepared under Section 102(2)(C); where the proposal involves an unresolved conflict, the responsible agency must study, develop and describe alternatives under Section 102(2)(E). To the extent this is not absolutely clear from the cases cited by Vepco, the Appeal Board decision in Consumers Power Company (Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant), ALAB-636, 13 NRC 312, demonstrates indisputably that the NRC's Section 102(2)(E) obligations are separate from and independent of the EIS question. Citing its earlier decision in the North Anna case, 11 NRC at 457-58, the Big Rock Point Appeal Board held specifically that a finding of "unresolved conflicts" is sufficient, by itself, to trigger the Section 102(2)(E) alternatives requirement. As noted elsewhere,^{18/} the Appeal Board's analysis in Big Rock Point is required by the statute itself, NEPA case law in the courts, and the CEQ regulations. Vepco's efforts to import a "significance"

^{18/} See County Mem. at 15-23 and pages 10-11, supra.

requirement into the Section 102(2)(E) inquiry should therefore be rejected by this Board.

B. The Proposed Action Involves "Unresolved Conflicts" and Therefore Alternatives Must Be Addressed.

The statute requires the NRC to "study, develop and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources." Section 102(2)(E) of NEPA, 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(E). "Although," as the Second Circuit observed in Trinity Episcopal School Corp. v. Romney, 523 F.2d at 93, "this language might conceivably encompass an almost limitless range," the Trinity court concluded that Section 102(2)(E) means that the responsible agency must study, develop, and describe alternatives whenever the objective of a proposed project "can be achieved in one of two or more ways that will have differing impacts on the environment." Id. Other courts that have considered this issue have adopted the Trinity court's approach. E.g., Township of Lower Alloways Creek v. Public Service Electric & Gas Company, 687 F.2d 732, 739n.14 (3d Cir. 1982); Environmental Defense Fund, Inc. v. Corps of Engineers, 492 F.2d at 1135; Hanly v. Kleindienst, 471 F.2d 823, 835 (2d Cir.), cert. denied, 409 U.S. 990 (1972). Moreover, even an NRC judgment that Vepco's proposed plan would have no adverse environmental impact, assuming for the moment that such an unlikely judgment could ever be made, would not obviate the Section 102(2)(E) alternatives requirement. As the Fifth Circuit

explained in the Environmental Defense Fund case, "the congressional mandate to develop alternatives would be thwarted by ending the search for other possibilities at the first proposal which establishes an ecological plus," 492 F.2d at 1135.

Thus, the central question before the Board is: does Vepco's proposed plan involve unresolved conflicts over alternative uses of available resources, or, as stated by the Trinity court, can the objective of Vepco's plan be achieved in one of two or more ways that will have differing impacts on the environment? No matter how the question is stated, the answer is clearly yes. Vepco claims that the Surry pool is running out of space; to solve the alleged storage problem, Vepco proposes to ship spent fuel from Surry to North Anna and store it in the North Anna pool. Stated in the terms employed by the statute, the available resource is the North Anna pool and the unresolved conflict is whether to use that limited space for Surry fuel or North Anna fuel. Stated in the terms used by the Trinity court, the objective of the proposed action is to provide interim storage for Surry spent fuel. This objective may be achieved by shipping the spent fuel to North Anna and storing it there or, for example, by pursuing an onsite solution, such as dry-cask storage or other alternatives raised by the County's contentions. There can be no doubt that the environmental impacts of Vepco's proposed offsite solution will be far different from the impacts of the onsite dry cask alternative. Transshipment, with its attendant environmental and health and safety consequences,

is the most obvious difference, but there are other differences as well. For example, one storage method involves use of water resources, the other does not; one system requires continuous water purification and frequent operational and maintenance attention, while the other, once set up, is passive.

Given the unique circumstances present here, where Vepco is proposing an integrated plan to expand the North Anna pool and to ship and store Surry fuel at North Anna, past Commission cases holding that the proposals then at issue did not involve unresolved conflicts, cited by Vepco and the Staff, are simply inapposite.^{19/} The determination whether a given proposal presents unresolved conflicts within the meaning of Section 102(2)(E) must be made on a case-by-case basis. See, e.g., Consumers Power Co. (Big Rock Point), 13 NRC at 332. The record before this Board demonstrates clearly that Surry's asserted storage problems may be resolved in any one of a number of different ways that will have different environmental consequences and, further, that the approach proposed by Vepco raises

^{19/} E.g., Consumers Power Company (Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant), Initial Decision (Concerning Environmental Issues), September 15, 1982 (spent fuel pool expansion, by itself, does not involve "unresolved conflicts"); Duke Power Co. (Amendment to Materials License SNM-1773 - Transportation of Spent Fuel From Oconee Nuclear Station For Storage At McGuire Nuclear Station), ALAB-651, 14 NRC at 322 (1981) (amendment to materials license to allow receipt of spent fuel at McGuire, a facility not yet in operation, does not "present a substantial natural resources commitment question").

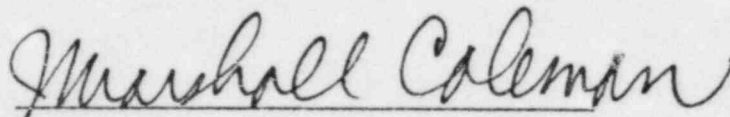
serious unresolved conflicts.^{20/} Therefore, under Section 102(2)(E), this Board must assess alternatives.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth herein and in the County's previous memorandum, the County respectfully requests the Board to exercise its jurisdiction over the transshipment issues raised by Vepco's proposed plan and to order consideration of alternatives in the context of these proceedings.

^{20/} Alternatively, if the Board is not satisfied with the record as it now stands, the Board should defer its decision on the alternatives question until after the Staff has issued its environmental impact appraisal. Consumers Power Co. (Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant), 13 NRC at 332.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served the foregoing County of Louisa, Virginia, and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Louisa, Virginia Reply Memorandum In Response To Board Order upon each of the persons named below by depositing a copy in the United States mail, properly stamped and addressed to him at the address set out with his name:

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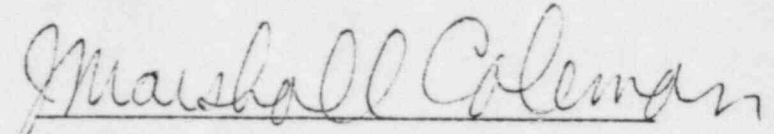
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