



UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

May 22, 2020

Ms. Amber Johnson, Director  
Nuclear Reactor and Radiation Facilities  
University of Maryland  
Department of Materials Science  
and Engineering  
4418 Stadium Drive, Room 1104  
College Park, MD 20742-2115

SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND – APPROVAL OF EXEMPTION FROM  
SELECT REQUIREMENTS OF 10 CFR PART 55, “OPERATORS’ LICENSES”

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has approved the requested exemption from specific requirements of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 55, “Operators’ Licenses,” for licensed operators at the Maryland University Training Reactor. This action is in response to the University of Maryland (facility licensee) application dated May 13, 2020 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML20142A271), related to an NRC letter dated April 14, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20104C071), describing a process to request expedited review of certain exemptions from 10 CFR Part 55 during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency (PHE).

Exemption from Medical Examination Requirements

The application requested exemption from medical examination requirements in 10 CFR 55.21 and 10 CFR 55.53(i) and provided the following information:

- The names and docket numbers of the licensed operators for whom the exemption is being requested.
- A description of the interim compensatory measures that the facility licensee is using to address delay in receipt of recommendations from a licensed physician concerning the licensed operators’ health.

Consistent with 10 CFR 55.11, “Specific exemptions,” the NRC may, upon application by an interested person, or upon its own initiative, grant such exemptions from the requirements of the regulations in 10 CFR Part 55 as it determines are authorized by law and will not endanger life or property and are otherwise in the public interest.

10 CFR 55.21 and 10 CFR 55.53(i) require a medical examination of each licensed operator every two years by a licensed physician who uses the applicable American National Standards Institute/American Nuclear Society (ANSI/ANS) standard. Based on this examination, the physician certifies whether the licensed operator has been found to meet the medical

requirements of 10 CFR 55.33(a)(1) and whether the licensed operator's license should be conditioned based on an identified health problem. Consistent with 10 CFR 55.25, "Incapacitation because of disability or illness," the facility licensee must notify the NRC if it learns that the licensed operator has developed a permanent condition that causes the licensed operator to fail to meet the health requirements. If the facility licensee alerts the NRC to a health concern, then the NRC uses a qualified medical expert to review the relevant medical information. Neither the facility licensee nor the NRC makes medical judgements of licensed operators.

A PHE requiring the use of social distancing and other practices intended to slow the spread of illness and the potential long-term unavailability of routine medical appointments due to a PHE were not considered during the rulemaking that established the medical examination requirements.

During the COVID-19 PHE, licensed operators might not be able to receive the required biennial medical examination from a licensed physician. The compensatory measure that the facility licensee (in coordination with the licensed operator) will implement during the exemption term will provide the results of a partial examination to the facility licensee, which will consider the recommendations as to whether the ANSI/ANS-15.4 standard appears to be met based on available information. Consistent with 10 CFR 55.25, the facility licensee must continue to notify the NRC of permanent conditions that cause licensed operators to fail to meet the health requirements. Based on the proposed compensatory measure and the continued compliance with the regulatory requirements in 10 CFR 55.25, the NRC staff finds that the requested exemption will not endanger life or property.

The requested exemption from the biennial medical examination requirements addresses the fact that a licensed operator may not be able to obtain this examination during the COVID-19 PHE because of a limited availability of medical resources and the possibility that an in-office medical examination may expose the operator to COVID-19. The requested exemption ensures that licensed operators are not required to take actions that would conflict with practices recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to limit the spread of COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the NRC staff finds that the requested exemption is in the public interest.

The NRC staff determined that exemption from the medical examination requirements is permissible under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, and other regulatory requirements. Therefore, the NRC staff finds that the requested exemption is authorized by law.

#### Exemption from Licensed Operator Active Status Requirements

The application requested exemption from licensed operator active status requirements in 10 CFR 55.53(e) and provided the following information:

- A request for exemption from the minimum of four hours per calendar quarter requirement normally needed to maintain active status under 10 CFR 55.53(e).
- A description of the alternative measures being used for the hours under the four-hour minimum of 10 CFR 55.53(e).

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<sup>1</sup> CDC, "How to Protect Yourself and Others," April 18, 2020 (ADAMS Accession No. ML20125A069).

- A statement that an authorized representative of the facility licensee will certify completion of alternative measures.

Consistent with 10 CFR 55.11, "Specific exemptions," the NRC may, upon application by an interested person, or upon its own initiative, grant such exemptions from the requirements of the regulations in 10 CFR Part 55 as it determines are authorized by law and will not endanger life or property and are otherwise in the public interest.

10 CFR 55.53(e) states that to maintain active status, the licensed operator shall actively perform the functions of an operator or senior operator for a minimum of four hours per calendar quarter.

A PHE requiring the use of social distancing and other practices intended to slow the spread of illness was not considered during the rulemaking that established the licensed operator active status requirements.

During the COVID-19 PHE, facility licensees may need flexibility in managing personnel resources to avoid creating a situation where licensed operators are required to perform functions in close proximity to each other. The compensatory measures that the facility licensee will implement during the exemption term include providing refresher training to licensed operators to ensure that operator competency is maintained. An authorized representative of the facility licensee will certify completion of the compensatory measures. Based on the proposed compensatory measures, the NRC staff finds that the requested exemption will not endanger life or property.

The requested exemption from the licensed operator active status requirements provides increased flexibility to facility licensees to shut down or otherwise minimize the number of licensed operators considered essential personnel to reduce the possibility of exposures to COVID-19 while also maintaining the knowledge and competency of licensed operators. Therefore, the NRC staff finds that the requested exemption is in the public interest.

The NRC staff determined that exemption from the licensed operator active status requirements is permissible under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, and other regulatory requirements. Therefore, the NRC staff finds that the requested exemption is authorized by law.

Granting the requested exemption from medical examination requirements in 10 CFR 55.21 and 10 CFR 55.53(i) and licensed operator active status requirements in 10 CFR 55.53(e) is categorically excluded under 10 CFR 51.22(c)(25) and there are no special or extraordinary circumstances present that would preclude reliance on this exclusion. The NRC staff determined, per 10 CFR 51.22(c)(25)(vi)(E), that the requirements from which the exemption is sought involve education, training, experience, qualification, requalification, or other employment suitability requirements. The NRC staff also determined that approval of the requested exemption involves no significant hazards consideration because it does not authorize any physical changes to the facility or any of its safety systems, nor does it change any of the assumptions or limits used in the facility licensee's safety analyses or introduce any new failure modes; no significant change in the types or significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite because the exemption does not affect any effluent release limits as provided in the facility licensee's technical specifications or by the regulations in 10 CFR Part 20, "Standards for Protection Against Radiation"; no significant increase in individual or cumulative public or occupational radiation exposure because the exemption does not affect limits on the release of any radioactive material or the limits provided in

10 CFR Part 20 for radiation exposure to workers or members of the public; no significant construction impact because the exemption does not involve any changes to a construction permit; and no significant increase in the potential for or consequences from radiological accidents because the exemption does not alter any of the assumptions or limits in the facility licensee's safety analyses. In addition, the NRC staff determined that there would be no significant impacts to biota, water resources, historic properties, cultural resources, or socioeconomic conditions in the region. As such, there are no extraordinary circumstances present that would preclude reliance on this categorical exclusion. Therefore, pursuant to 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the approval of the requested exemption.

Based on the above, the NRC staff finds that (1) the exemption is authorized by law, (2) the exemption will not endanger life or property, and (3) the exemption is otherwise in the public interest.

The exemption is effective upon issuance until 90 days after the COVID-19 PHE is ended or until December 31, 2020, whichever occurs first.

Sincerely,

***/RA Brian W. Smith for/***

John D. Monninger, Director  
Division of Advanced Reactors and Non-Power  
Production and Utilization Facilities  
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-166

cc: See next page

University of Maryland

Docket No. 50-166

cc:

Director, Maryland Department  
of Natural Resources  
Power Plant Research Program  
Tawes State Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Roland Fletcher, Manager  
Radiological Health Program  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
1800 Washington Blvd., Suite 750  
Baltimore, MD 21230

Alan Jacobson, Manager Radiation Safety  
University of Maryland  
Department of Environmental Safety  
Sustainability & Risk  
Office of Research Safety  
4716 Pontiac Street, Seneca Building  
College Park, MD 20742

Dr. Ji-Cheng Zhao, Chair  
University of Maryland  
Department of Materials Science  
and Engineering  
4418 Stadium Drive  
College Park, MD 20742-2115

Test, Research and Training  
Reactor Newsletter  
Attention: Ms. Amber Johnson  
University of Maryland  
Department of Materials Science  
and Engineering  
4418 Stadium Drive  
College Park, MD 20742-2115

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**ADAMS Accession No.: ML20142A260 Package****\*via e-mail****NRR-048**

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