

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-356]

Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact; Regarding Issuance of a Specific Exemption to the Requirements of 10 CFR 50.82(b)(6)(ii); University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Low Power Reactor Assembly

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is considering granting, for Facility Operating License No. R-117 for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (the licensee or University) Low Power Reactor Assembly (LOPRA) located on the licensee's campus in Urbana, Illinois, a specific exemption in accordance with 10 CFR 50.12 to the part of the requirements of 10 CFR 50.82(b)(6)(ii) that requires a terminal radiation survey and associated documentation to demonstrate that the facility and site are suitable for release as a condition of license termination.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of Proposed Action

By application dated February 10, 1995, as supplemented on April 24, 1995, and October 2, 1996, the licensee requested authorization to decommission the LOPRA in accordance with the proposed decommissioning plan, and terminate Facility Operating License No. R-117. Amendment No. 6 to the facility operating license was issued on January 21, 1997, approving the decommissioning plan. The licensee informed the NRC in a letter dated April 15, 1997, that the University has completed decommissioning of the LOPRA in accordance with the amendment. The NRC project manager for the LOPRA and a non-power reactor inspector visited the site on May 7, 1997, and found that the licensee had decommissioned the LOPRA in accordance with the license amendment and that no licensed material remained under the authority of the LOPRA license. The licensee had transferred the LOPRA components and fuel to the Advanced TRIGA Research Reactor (TRIGA) license (Docket No. 50-151, Facility License No. R-115). Some components containing byproduct material were subsequently transferred to a University of Illinois byproduct materials license (License IL-01271-01), issued by the State of Illinois to allow the components to be stored at a facility away from the Nuclear Reactor Laboratory.

The University's Nuclear Reactor Laboratory houses the TRIGA (which the University continues to operate) and housed the LOPRA, which was located in the bulk shielding tank of the TRIGA. The Nuclear Reactor Laboratory continues to be subject to the terms of the TRIGA license. The Nuclear Reactor Laboratory will be considered for release by NRC as part of the request to terminate the TRIGA license at some time in the future. Because the facility and site will continue to be used under an NRC license and will be surveyed in the future, and because application of the regulation is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule, the licensee requested in its letter of April 15, 1997, that NRC consider granting a specific exemption in accordance with 10 CFR 50.12 to the part of the requirements of 10 CFR 50.82(b)(6)(ii) that requires a terminal radiation survey and associated documentation to demonstrate that the facility and site are suitable for release as a condition for license termination.

The Need for Proposed Action

The exemption is needed for termination of Facility Operating License No. R-117.

Environmental Impact of Granting of Exemption

No licensed material remains under the authority of the LOPRA license. The NRC staff has verified that the LOPRA components and fuel have been transferred to the TRIGA license and the University of Illinois byproduct materials license, issued by the State of Illinois, which are authorized to receive this material. Future use of these components and fuel as a subcritical assembly in the TRIGA bulk shielding tank is currently authorized by the TRIGA license. With the transfer of all licensed material from the LOPRA license, the termination of the LOPRA license is administrative in nature. Because the facility and site will continue to be used under an NRC license, and because no facility or site is to be released as part of the license termination, granting the exemption will have no effect on the status of the site and, thus, no significant impact on the environment.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denying the proposed action. Not granting the exemption would not change current environmental impacts and would require continuance of Facility Operating License No. R-117. The staff also considered taking no action. This

would have the same outcome as not granting the proposed action. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and of the alternative actions are similar. Since the LOPRA components and fuel have been transferred to other licenses that are authorized to receive this material, there is no alternative with less environmental impact than granting the exemption, which would allow the termination of Facility Operating License No. R-117.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

The staff consulted with the Illinois State official regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The NRC has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed action. On the basis of the foregoing environmental assessment, the NRC has concluded that the granting of the exemption will have no significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

For further details with respect to this proposed action, see the application for termination of Facility Operating License No. R-117, dated February 10, 1995, as supplemented, which includes the letter of April 15, 1997, which requests the exemption. These documents are available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC 20037.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 9th day of July 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Biweekly Notice

Applications and Amendments to Facility Operating Licenses Involving No Significant Hazards Considerations

I. Background

Pursuant to Public Law 97-415, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission or NRC staff) is publishing this regular biweekly notice. Public Law 97-415 revised section 189 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), to require the Commission to publish notice of any