

Place: National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Rooms 830 and 880, Arlington, VA 22230.

Type of Meeting: Closed.

Contact Person: Dr. Bernice T. Anderson, Program Director, Research, Evaluation and Communication, Room 855, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22230, Telephone: (703) 306-1650.

Purpose of Meeting: To provide advice and recommendations concerning proposals submitted to NSF for financial support.

Agenda: To review and evaluate formal proposals submitted to Evaluation Program as part of the selection process for awards.

Reason for Closing: The proposals being reviewed include information of a proprietary or confidential nature, including technical information; financial data, such as salaries; and personal information concerning individuals associated with the proposals. These matters are exempt under 5 U.S.C. 552b(c), (4), and (6) of the Government in the Sunshine Act.

M. Rebecca Winkler,

Committee Management Officer.

[FR Doc. 98-16527 Filed 6-19-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7555-01-M

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50-244]

Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation (R.E. Ginna Nuclear Power Plant); Revocation of Exemption

I

The Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation (the licensee) is the holder of Facility Operating License No. DPR-18, which authorizes operation of the R. E. Ginna Nuclear Power Plant. The license provides that the licensee is subject to all rules, regulations, and orders of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or the Commission) now or hereafter in effect.

The facility consists of a pressurized-water reactor at the licensee's site located in Wayne County, New York.

II

On March 21, 1985, the NRC issued 11 exemptions from the requirements of Section III.G of Appendix R to 10 CFR Part 50. The first exemption, relevant here, related to the Refueling Water Storage Tank (RWST). The licensee was granted an exemption from the technical requirements of Section III.G.2 in connection with the absence of a required continuous fire-rated barrier between redundant shutdown systems in the Auxiliary Building Fire Areas ABBM and ABI. The RWST extends through the concrete floor/ceiling at elevation 271 feet, which provides the

common boundary between Fire Area ABBM and ABI. An 8-foot concrete block wall partially circles the circumference of the RWST on the upper side of the barrier. At the time the exemption was granted, there was a 6-inch gap around the circumference of the RWST.

III

By letter dated January 13, 1998, the licensee informed the NRC that the exemption is no longer required. The licensee indicated that the subject barrier has now been sealed by insertion of a 12 inch minimum depth of kaowool into the 6-inch gap around the circumference of the tank and closure of the gap by a 3/4-inch thick steel plate.

On the basis of the licensee's submittal, the Commission hereby revokes the exemption granted on March 21, 1985, from the technical requirements of Section III.G of Appendix R to 10 CFR Part 50 with respect to the absence of a continuous fire-rated barrier at the common boundary between Fire Areas ABBM and ABI. The NRC staff did not review the modification that the licensee implemented to eliminate the need for the original exemption. The NRC staff may review the modification and its supporting technical bases during a future on-site inspection.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the revocation of the exemption will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment (63 FR 31534).

This revocation of exemption is effective upon issuance.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 15th day of June 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

S. Singh Bajwa,

Director, Project Directorate I-1, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 98-16538 Filed 6-19-98; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Texas License L03835]

ProTechnics International, Inc.—Houston, TX: Field Flood Tracer Study; Finding of No Significant Impact and Notice of Opportunity for a Hearing

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering authorizing ProTechnics International, Inc. (ProTechnics) to conduct a field flood tracer study in an oil reservoir located at the Green Valley Unit, Noble County, Oklahoma near Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed action is authorizing ProTechnics to conduct a field flood tracer study using hydrogen-3 in an oil reservoir located at the Green Valley Unit, Noble County, Oklahoma, near the town of Stillwater, Oklahoma. ProTechnics, with offices in Houston, Texas, is authorized by the State of Texas License L03835, to conduct field flood tracer activities in oil and gas reservoirs at temporary jobsites within that State. NRC's regulations in 10 CFR 150.20, "Reciprocity—Recognition of Agreement State Licenses," states, in part, " * * * any person holding a specific license from an Agreement State where the licensee maintains an office for directing the licensed activity * * * is granted a general license to conduct the same activity in * * * Non-Agreement States * * * [provided] the specific Agreement State license [does not] limit the authorized activity to a specific installation or location." Because the Texas license authorizes ProTechnics to use the requested radioisotopes in field flood tracer studies at temporary jobsites, ProTechnics qualifies for the general license. Paragraph (b)(1) of 10 CFR Part 150.20 further states, " * * * [any person] shall * * * before engaging in each activity * * * file an NRC Form-241, "Report of Proposed Activities in Non-Agreement States" * * * "with NRC. ProTechnics met this requirement with a submission dated April 22, 1998.

On January 13, 1997 (62 FR 1662), NRC published a final rule in the **Federal Register** amending 10 CFR 150.20. The amendment, primarily intended to clarify requirements concerning activities conducted at areas of exclusive federal jurisdiction with Agreement States, also revised 10 CFR 150.20(b) to make clear that licensees operating pursuant to the rule must comply with all NRC regulations applicable to materials licensees. 10 CFR Part 51 specifies the environmental protection regulations applicable to NRC's licensing activities and implements section 102(2) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Section 51.21 provides that all licensing actions require an environmental assessment except those identified in 10 CFR 51.20 as requiring an environmental impact statement or those identified in 10 CFR 51.22(c) as categorical exclusions. The use of radioactive tracers in field flood studies is not identified in either section. Therefore, an environmental assessment must be prepared. Paragraph 51.60(b)(1)(vi) requires that an applicant

submit an environmental report with any request for use of radioactive tracers in field flood studies. ProTechnics submitted an environmental report in a letter dated April 1, 1998.

The Need for the Proposed Action

The action is to determine if the licensee's request to perform activities under the general license should be approved or denied. Field flood tracer studies are conducted in conjunction with enhanced recovery of oil and natural gas, commonly referred to as enhanced oil recovery (EOR).

The oil from a producing well in a new reservoir initially flows because of the pressure exerted by water and gas in the reservoir. As oil production continues the reservoir pressure declines unless fluids are injected into the reservoir to maintain the pressure. The average recovery from primary production, with and without pressure maintenance, is 20 to 30 percent of the original oil in place. Oil production can be increased through a secondary recovery technique called waterflooding, which is the injection of water through injection wells to push the oil toward production wells. Further enhancements in oil production may occur with the use of so-called tertiary recovery methods in which steam, surfactants (soaps), or other compounds or gases are injected into the reservoir.

Radioactive tracers are used to define the movement of liquids or gases injected into an oil and gas reservoir to enhance recovery and to monitor reservoir performance. The water-soluble or gaseous tracer is introduced into a reservoir with the injected fluid. Both radioactive and nonradioactive tracers may be used. The tracer is placed in the injection well, where it is diluted and swept into the reservoir by injection liquid or gas. The diluted tracer is subsequently recovered at production wells and is monitored by sampling the recovered fluids.

In evaluating reservoir performance, it is desirable to determine the source of the injected fluid being collected at a production well. It is frequently desirable, therefore, to employ several tracers, using a different tracer in each of a number of injection wells.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

NRC published NUREG/CR-3467, "Environmental Assessment of the Use of Radionuclides as Tracers in the Enhanced Recovery of Oil and Gas" in November 1983. This generic environmental assessment (EA) evaluated the use of 16 different radioisotopes, used in certain activity

ranges, as interwell tracers in field flooding for EOR operations. A typical operation using radioisotopes for interwell tracing was analyzed from the standpoint of three stages of operation: aboveground, subsurface, and recovery and disposal. Doses to workers who handle radioactive tracers and to members of the public were estimated for normal and accidental exposure scenarios. For the isotope ProTechnics requested authorization to use, NUREG/CR-3467 analyzed the use of up to 30 curies of hydrogen-3. The ProTechnics submittal only requests authorization to use up to 2 curies of hydrogen-3, well within the bounds of the generic assessment. The NUREG estimated the national radiological impact on the use of radioisotopes as interwell tracers in EOR projects to be a collective dose equivalent of less than 16 man-rem/yr. Accidental exposures were estimated to contribute little to the total. The ProTechnics proposal, which only includes one radioisotope and only a small percentage of the total activity evaluated in the NUREG for that radioisotope, will result in a lower collective dose equivalent.

Alternatives

Denial of ProTechnics request is a possible alternative to the proposed action. This would avoid any of the environmental impacts associated with the use of radioactive tracers. However, the proposed action is nevertheless reasonable because its environmental impacts are so small and it will provide benefits such as assisting to meet U.S. energy needs.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

Ms. Pam Bishop of the State of Oklahoma, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), was contacted on June 2, 1998, to discuss ProTechnics field flood tracer study reciprocity request and its potential environmental impacts. In a letter dated June 8, 1998, Ms. Bishop indicated that the DEQ had no objections to the tracer study.

Conclusion

The NRC staff concludes that the environmental impacts associated with ProTechnics proposed request to conduct a field flood tracer study using hydrogen-3 in an oil reservoir located at the Green Valley Unit, Noble County, Oklahoma, are expected to be significant.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The Commission previously prepared an EA related to the use of certain quantities of radionuclides as tracers in

field flood operations for the enhanced recovery of oil and gas. On the basis of the assessment, the Commission concluded that environmental impacts that would be created by such actions would not be significant and do not warrant the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Because ProTechnics' request is within the bounds of that EA, it has been determined that a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate.

The generic EA is made available as NUREG/CR-3467. Copies of NUREG/CR-3467 may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 37082, Washington, DC 20402-9328. Copies are also available from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161. A copy and ProTechnics' submittal are also available for inspection and copying for a fee in the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW. (Lower Level), Washington, DC 20555-0001.

Opportunity for a Hearing

Any person whose interest may be affected by the approval of this action may file a request for a hearing. Any request for hearing must be filed with the Office of the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555, within 30 days of the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, be served on the NRC staff (Executive Director for Operations, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852), and on the licensee (ProTechnics International, Inc., 1160 Dairy Ashford, Suite 444, Houston, TX 77079); and must comply with the requirements for requesting a hearing set forth in the Commission's regulations, 10 CFR Part 2, Subpart L, "Information Hearing Procedures for Adjudications in Materials Licensing Proceedings."

These requirements, which the request must address in detail, are:

1. The interest of the requestor in the proceeding;

2. How that interest may be affected by the results of the proceeding (including the reasons why the requestor should be permitted a hearing);

3. The requestor's areas of concern about the licensing activity that is the subject matter of the proceeding; and

4. The circumstances establishing that the request for hearing is timely—that is, filed within 30 days of the date of this notice.

In addressing how the requestor's interest may be affected by the proceeding, the request should describe

the nature of the requestor's right under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, to be made a party to the proceeding; the nature and extent of the requestor's property, financial, or other (i.e., health, safety) interest in the proceeding; and the possible effect of any order that may be entered in the proceeding upon the requestor's interest.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 16th day of June, 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Stevens L. Baggett,

*Acting Chief, Materials Safety Branch,
Division of Industrial and Medical Nuclear
Safety, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and
Safeguards.*

[FR Doc. 98-16537 Filed 6-19-98; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50-361 and 50-362]

Southern California Edison Company, et al.; San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, Units 2 and 3; Issuance of Director's Decision Under 10 CFR 2.206

Notice is hereby given that the Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, has acted on a Petition for action under 10 CFR 2.206 received from Mr. Stephen Dwyer dated April 25, 1997, for the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS), Units 2 and 3.

The Petition requests that the Commission shut down the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station pending a retrofitting of the steam generators. As a basis for the request, the Petitioner asserts that the ability of the steam generators to withstand a major seismic event is seriously compromised by the degraded eggcrate supports discovered in the SONGS Unit 3 steam generators.

The Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation has determined that the request should be denied for the reasons stated in the "Director's Decision Under 10 CFR 2.206" (DD-98-06), the complete text of which follows this notice and which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20555-0001, and at the Local Public Document Room located at the Main Library, University of California, P.O. Box 19557, Irvine, California 92713.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 11th day of June 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Samuel J. Collins,

*Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor
Regulation.*

Director's Decision Under 10 CFR 2.206

I. Introduction

By e-mail dated April 25, 1997, Stephen Dwyer (Petitioner) requested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) take action with regard to San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) regarding his concerns about the ability of the SONGS steam generators to withstand a major seismic event.¹ Specifically, the Petitioner stated that the ability of the SONGS steam generators to withstand a major seismic event is seriously compromised by the degradation observed in the SONGS Unit 3 steam generator internal tube supports (eggcrate supports) during its 1997 refueling outage. The Petitioner requested an investigation to determine if Unit 2 has experienced degradation similar to that found in Unit 3 and also stated that further seismic analysis should be performed for the SONGS steam generators and that a retrofitting upgrade of the steam generator supports could be accomplished at this time. On June 26, 1997, the NRC staff acknowledged receipt of the Petition as a request pursuant to Section 2.206 of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR 2.206) and informed the Petitioner that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that immediate action was warranted. Notice of the receipt of the Petition indicating that a final decision with respect to the requested action would be forthcoming within a reasonable time was published in the **Federal Register** on July 3, 1997 (62 FR 36085).

My Decision in this matter follows.

¹ The Petitioner sought to add this concern to his Petition dated September 22, 1996, wherein he requested the NRC to shut down the SONGS facility "as soon as possible" pending a complete review of the seismic design of the SONGS units based on information gathered from the Landers and Northridge earthquakes. By letter dated June 26, 1997, the NRC advised the Petitioner that his e-mail request dated April 25, 1997, concerning the ability of the SONGS steam generators to withstand a major seismic event, would be treated as a separate 10 CFR 2.206 Petition. The Director's Decision (DD-97-23) issued by the NRC on September 19, 1997, denied the Petitioner's September 22, 1996, request to shut down the SONGS units, providing a detailed discussion of the adequacy of the seismic licensing basis for the SONGS facility.

II. Discussion

A. Request for an Investigation to Determine if SONGS Unit 2 Has Experienced Eggcrate Degradation Similar to Unit 3

1. Background

The SONGS units utilize Combustion Engineering Model 3410 recirculating steam generators. This model of steam generator contains 9,350 Inconel 600 (ASME Material Specification SB-163) U-tubes with a nominal diameter and wall thickness of 0.75 and 0.048 inch, respectively. Secondary side tube support structures consist of seven horizontal full eggcrate supports, three horizontal partial eggcrate supports, and upper bundle supports (i.e., two batwing diagonal supports and seven vertical supports). The materials used for fabrication of the steam generator vessels and internals (including tube supports) are low-alloy and carbon steels, respectively. Figure 1 is a simplified cross-sectional diagram of the SONGS steam generators that clearly displays the 10 eggcrate support levels, and Figure 2 is a three-dimensional representation of the steam generators that gives additional structural detail.

The eggcrate supports consist of 1- and 2-inch carbon steel strips interlocked perpendicular to each other as shown in Figure 3. The eggcrate supports limit lateral motion of the tubes and, at the same time, allow free flow of fluid around the tubes.

During the 1997 refueling outage for SONGS Unit 3, the licensee discovered that portions of the eggcrate supports had experienced degradation, ranging from minor wastage of the eggcrate material to severe thinning in localized areas. The significant degradation observed during this refueling outage was confined mainly to the periphery locations of the eggcrate supports. The secondary sides of the steam generators in both units were inspected during their 1997 refueling outages and during their 1998 mid-cycle outages and, as discussed below, significant degradation was limited to the periphery locations of the SONGS Unit 3 eggcrate supports.

The licensee has extensively researched the cause of the eggcrate degradation and has concluded that the degradation was caused by a form of flow accelerated corrosion (FAC), a general term describing processes that use assistance from fluid flow to remove the protective oxide layer from base material. Removal of the protective oxide layer exposes the base material to the fluid environment, allowing further material removal through corrosion and/or erosion processes. The carbon steel