

ASME Section XI, Appendix A, Figure A-2200-1 (the K_{Ic} fracture toughness curve) provides greater allowable fracture toughness than the corresponding K_{Ia} fracture toughness curve of ASME Section XI, Appendix G, Figure G-2210-1 (the K_{Ia} fracture toughness curve), using Code Case N-640 for establishing the P-T limits and LTOP setpoints would be less conservative than the methodology currently endorsed by 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix G and, therefore, an exemption to apply the Code Case would be required by 10 CFR 50.60. It should be noted that, although Code Case N-640 was incorporated into the ASME Code recently, an exemption is still needed because the proposed P-T limits and LTOP setpoints (excluding Code Cases N-640) are based on the 1989 edition of the ASME Code.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for exemption dated April 12, 2000, as supplemented on June 2, 2000.

The Need for the Proposed Action

Use of the K_{Ic} curve, Code Case N-640, in determining the lower bound fracture toughness in the development of P-T operating limit curves and LTOP setpoints is more technically correct than use of the K_{Ia} curve since the rate of loading during a heatup or cooldown is slow and is more representative of a static condition than a dynamic condition. The K_{Ic} curve appropriately implements the use of static initiation fracture toughness behavior to evaluate the controlled heatup and cooldown process of a reactor vessel. The staff has required use of the conservatism of the K_{Ia} curve since 1974, when the curve was adopted by the ASME Code. This conservatism was initially necessary due to the limited knowledge of the fracture toughness of RPV materials at that time. Since 1974, additional knowledge has been gained about RPV materials, which demonstrates that the lower bound on fracture toughness provided by the K_{Ia} curve greatly exceeds the margin of safety required to protect the public health and safety from potential RPV failure. In addition, P-T curves and LTOP setpoints based on the K_{Ic} curve will enhance overall plant safety by opening the P-T operating window, with the greatest safety benefit in the region of low temperature operations.

Since an unnecessarily reduced P-T operating window can reduce operator flexibility without just basis, implementation of the proposed P-T curves and LTOP setpoints as allowed by ASME Code Case N-640 may result in enhanced safety during critical plant operational periods, specifically heatup

and cooldown conditions. Thus, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.12(a)(2)(ii), the underlying purpose of 10 CFR 50.60 and Appendix G to 10 CFR Part 50 will continue to be served.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The NRC has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that the exemption described above would provide an adequate margin of safety against brittle failure of the HNP reactor pressure vessel.

The proposed action will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluents that may be released offsite, and there is no significant increase in occupational or public radiation exposure. Therefore, there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological environmental impacts, the proposed action does not involve any historic sites. It does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impacts.

Therefore, there are no significant nonradiological impacts associated with the proposed action.

Accordingly, the NRC concludes that there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action (*i.e.*, the "no-action" alternative). Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternative action are similar.

Alternative Use of Resources

This action does not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement for HNP.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on July 11, 2000, the staff consulted with the North Carolina State official, Mr. Johnny James of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

Finding of No Significant Impact

On the basis of the environmental assessment, the NRC concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the

human environment. Accordingly, the NRC has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed action.

For further details with respect to the proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated April 12, 2000, as supplemented on June 2, 2000, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC. Publicly available records will be accessible electronically from the ADAMS Public Library component on the NRC Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov> (the Electronic Reading Room).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 17th day of July 2000.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Richard J. Laufer,

Project Manager, Section 2, Project Directorate II, Division of Licensing Project Management Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 00-18656 Filed 7-21-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590-01-P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

NRC To Hold Public Meetings on Spent Fuel Shipping Cask Accident Studies

AGENCY: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings on spent nuclear fuel transportation studies.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC or Commission) is approaching the end of the scoping phase of a study on spent nuclear fuel cask responses to severe transportation accidents (*i.e.*, the Package Performance Study (PPS)). The scoping phase will determine which issues and approaches are to be used for succeeding phases (including planning, conducting, and documenting any analyses or tests). In addition, in March 2000, NRC published the technical report for a related study, NUREG/CR-6672, "Reexamination of Spent Fuel Shipment Risk Estimates," and a discussion summary paper is available to complement that technical report. To facilitate discussion on these activities, NRC is convening an August public workshop and two public meetings in Nevada, and a September workshop in Rockville, Maryland.

A World Wide Web site has been established for dissemination of information to interested members of the public. Electronic copies of documents related to these studies, and

additional information on the public meetings, can be obtained at <http://ttd.sandia.gov/nrc/modal.htm>. Francis X. Cameron, Special Counsel for Public Liaison, in the Commission's Office of the General Counsel, will be the convener and facilitator for the meetings.

DATES AND ADDRESSES: The meetings are planned as follows:

- Public workshop: August 15, 2000, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., in the Hawaiian room at the Tropicana Hotel, 3801 Las Vegas Boulevard, Las Vegas, NV;
- Public meeting: August 15, 2000, 7–9 p.m., in the Hawaiian room at the Tropicana Hotel, 3801 Las Vegas Boulevard, Las Vegas, NV;
- Public meeting: August 16, 2000, 7:00–9:00 p.m., at the Mountain View Casino & Bowl, 1750 Pahrump Valley Blvd., Pahrump, NV; and
- Public workshop: September 13, 2000, 9:30 a.m.–3 p.m., in the NRC's Two-White Flint North Auditorium, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD.

INFORMATION: Contact Francis X. Cameron, Special Counsel for Public Liaison, Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC, 20555–0001, Telephone: (301) 415–1642 about any questions on the meetings. Copies of materials related to these meetings can be obtained on-line at <http://ttd.sandia.gov/nrc/modal.htm>, or from Robert Lewis, NRC, Telephone: (301) 415–8527.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The risk of transporting highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel from nuclear power plants to a centralized storage facility or to an underground repository is an issue that has recently received increased NRC and public attention because of the increase in the number of shipments that will occur if and when such facilities begin operating. Risk to the public from transportation accidents depends on accident rates, number of shipments, and the likely consequences and severity of the accidents. About 1300 shipments of spent nuclear fuel have been made in NRC-certified packages, with an exceptional safety record of no releases from accidents. Despite the previous studies and safety record, several groups have criticized NRC's cask standards and previous studies as being insufficient to adequately demonstrate safety during severe transportation accidents.

NRC previously studied transportation accident risks in the 1980s (*e.g.*, see NUREG/CR–4829, "Shipping Container Response to Severe Highway and Railway Accident Conditions," and NUREG/BR–0111,

"Transporting Spent Fuel, Protection Provided Against Severe Highway and Railroad Accidents," often called the 'modal study'). The modal study looked at possible rail and highway accidents and concluded that spent nuclear fuel cask designs would survive nearly all transportation accidents without releasing radioactive material to the environment. Over the next few years NRC will revisit, in the Package Performance Study, the conclusions of the 1987 modal study, to evaluate their continued validity in light of newer cask technologies and approaches. Risk insights obtained using modern analysis techniques, physical testing, and through interaction with stakeholders and the public, will support NRC's ongoing efforts to assure that its regulatory actions maintain safety and are risk-informed and effective. Ongoing public interactions throughout this project will help ensure that public concerns are effectively identified and understood, and that the study design considers these issues. A related study, NUREG/CR–6672, "Reexamination of Spent Fuel Shipment Risk Estimates," was published in March 2000, and looked at both accident and incident-free risks from a large spent fuel transportation campaign. A discussion summary paper is available to complement the technical report for that study.

NRC is holding two public workshops and two public meetings to focus on these activities, and specifically to discuss stakeholder views and comments on two documents: (1) The Package Performance Study issues and resolution options report, and (2) a discussion summary paper regarding NUREG/CR–6672.

During the morning and afternoon of August 15 in Las Vegas, and on September 13 in Rockville, MD, representatives of the interests affected by the study will discuss their views on the issues in a "workshop" format. The Commission, through the facilitator for the meeting, will attempt to ensure participation by the broad spectrum of interests at the meetings, including citizen and environmental groups, nuclear and transportation industry interests, state, tribal, and local governments, experts from academia, or other agencies. Other members of the public are welcome to attend, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on each of the agenda items slated for discussion. Questions about participation may be directed to the facilitator, Francis X. Cameron.

On the evenings of August 15 in Las Vegas and on August 16 in Pahrump, public meetings will be conducted. At

these meetings, the NRC staff will briefly present the NRC's role in ensuring transportation safety and its views regarding the two studies. A moderated discussion will then be held to discuss the study's proposed content or approach. The NRC staff will be available to further discuss issues or public concerns regarding the studies or transportation safety.

The first part of each meeting will be about NUREG/CR–6672 and the discussion paper; the remainder will be to discuss the PPS issues report. NRC is sharing these documents with the public before the public meetings, to obtain timely feedback on their content and to continue the constructive interactions on transportation risk issues that began at workshops and public meetings in 1999. Copies of the documents can be obtained on-line at <http://ttd.sandia.gov/nrc/modal.htm>, or through the NRC contacts listed above. NRC is particularly interested in views on the discussion paper's usefulness, both as a summary of NUREG/CR–6672 and as a communication about transportation risks. Regarding the PPS issues and resolution options, NRC desires to ensure that comments made at the 1999 public workshops, made in letters, or made through the Web site, have been included and appropriately characterized in this report. NRC will use the discussions on the PPS issues report, to help decide which issues and resolution options will be examined by the next phases of the PPS.

The public workshop and public meetings will have a scope and agenda. However, the agenda format will be sufficiently flexible to allow for the introduction of additional related issues that the participants may wish to raise. The purpose of the meetings is to hear the views of the participants on the issues and options to resolve the issues for the forthcoming study. The agenda for the meetings is set forth below.

Public Workshop Agenda—Spent Nuclear Fuel Transportation Studies

August 15, 2000 (Las Vegas, NV) and September 13, 2000 (Rockville, MD)

9:00 a.m.—Open House

9:30 a.m.—10:00 a.m.—Call to Order; Introductions and Ground Rules (Francis X. Cameron, NRC, Facilitator, Susan F. Shankman, Spent Fuel Project Office, NRC)

10:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.—"Reexamination of Spent Fuel Shipment Risk Estimates," (NUREG/CR–6672) and the associated "Discussion Paper"

Participant Discussion

11:30 a.m.—12:45 p.m.—Break for Lunch

12:45 p.m.—1:15 p.m.—Participant

Discussion (continued)

1:15 p.m.–2:30 p.m.—Package Performance Study Issues Report Project Overview and Public Interactions (Robert Lewis, NRC) Presentation of Issues Report and Options for Study Participant Discussion
 2:30 p.m.–2:45 p.m.—Break
 2:45 p.m.–3:45 p.m.—Package Performance Study Issues Report Participant Discussion (continued)
 3:45 p.m.–4:15 p.m.—Breakout Discussions with NRC Staff
 4:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.—Wrap-up
 4:30 p.m.—Adjourn

Public Meeting Agenda—Spent Nuclear Fuel Transportation Studies

August 15, 2000 (Las Vegas, NV) and August 16, 2000 (Pahrump, NV) Seminar, 7:00 P.M.–9:00 P.M.

7:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.—Welcome and Overview (Francis X. Cameron, NRC, facilitator)
 NRC Role and Regulatory Framework for Transportation
 NRC Spent Fuel Transportation Studies

7:30 p.m.–8:15 p.m.—Facilitated Discussion on “Reexamination of Spent Fuel Shipment Risk Estimates,” (NUREG/CR-6672) and the associated “Discussion Paper” (Francis X. Cameron, NRC, facilitator)

An opportunity for the public to discuss this project with the NRC staff.

8:15 p.m.–9:00 p.m.—Facilitated Discussion on “Package Performance Study Issues Report” (Francis X. Cameron, NRC, facilitator)

An opportunity for the public to discuss this project with the NRC staff.

9:00 p.m.—Wrap-up and Adjourn

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 17th day of July 2000.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

E. William Brach,

Director, Spent Fuel Project Office, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards.

[FR Doc. 00-18657 Filed 7-21-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590-01-P

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Request for Public Comment

Upon Written Request, Copies Available From: Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of Filings and Information Services, Washington, DC 20549.

Extensions: Rule 6c-7, SEC File No. 270-269, OMB Control No. 3235-0276, and Rule 11a-2, SEC File No. 270-267, OMB Control No. 3235-0272.

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”) is soliciting comments on the collection of information summarized below. The Commission plans to submit this existing collection of information to the Office of Management and Budget for extension and approval.

Rule 6c-7 [17 CFR 270.6c-7] under the Investment Company Act of 1940 (15 U.S.C. 80a-1 *et seq.*) (“1940 Act”) provides exemption from certain provisions of Sections 22(e) and 27 of the 1940 Act for registered separate accounts offering variable annuity contracts to certain employees of Texas institutions of higher education participating in the Texas Optional Retirement Program. There are approximately 82 registrants governed by Rule 6c-7. The burden of compliance with Rule 6c-7, regarding obtaining from a purchaser, prior to or at the time of purchase, a signed document acknowledging the restrictions on redeemability imposed by Texas law, is estimated to be approximately 3 minutes per response for each of 2,649 purchasers annually, for a total annual burden of 132.45 hours.

Rule 11a-2 [17 CFR 270.11a-2] permits certain registered insurance company separate accounts, subject to certain conditions, to make exchange offers without prior approval by the Commission of the terms of those offers. Rule 11a-2 requires disclosure, in certain registration statements filed pursuant to the 1933 Act, of any administrative fee or sales load imposed in connection with an exchange offer. There are approximately 649 restraints governed by Rule 11a-2, with an estimated compliance time of 15 minutes per registrant.

The estimate of average burden hours is made solely for the purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act, and is not derived from a comprehensive or even a representative survey or study of the costs of Commission rules or forms. With regard to Rule 6c-7, the Commission does not include in the estimate of average burden hours the time preparing registration statement and sales literature disclosure regarding the restrictions or redeemability imposed by Texas law. The estimate of burden hours for completing the relevant registration statements are reported on the separate PRA submissions for those statements (see the separate PRA submissions for Form N-3 [17 CFR 274.11b] and Form N-4 [17 CFR 274.11c]). With regard to Rule 11a-2, the Commission includes the estimate

of burden hours in the total number of burden hours estimated for completing the relevant registration statements and reported on the separate PRA submissions for those statements (see the separate PRA submissions for Form N-3 and Form N-4).

Complying with the collection of information requirements of the rules is necessary to obtain a benefit. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid control number.

Written comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Commission, including whether the information has practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Commission’s estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Consideration will be given to comments and suggestions submitted in writing within 60 days of this publication.

Direct your written comment to Michael E. Bartell, Associate Executive Director, Office of Information Technology, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20549.

Dated: July 14, 2000.

Jonathan G. Katz,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 00-18592 Filed 7-21-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8010-01-M

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

Upon Written Request; Copies Available From: Securities and Exchange Commission, Office of Filings and Information Services, Washington, DC 20549.

Extension: Form 8-A, OMB Control No. 3235-0056, SEC File No. 270-54, and Form 18-K, OMB Control No. 3235-0120, SEC File No. 270-108.

Notice is hereby given that, pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*) the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) has submitted to the Office of Management and Budget requests for extension of the previously