II. Desired Focus of Comments

OWCP is soliciting comments concerning the proposed information collection related to the OWCP 1168 Provider Enrollment Form. OWCP is particularly interested in comments that:

- Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information has practical utility;
- Evaluate the accuracy of CEO's estimate of the burden related to the information collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used in the estimate;
- Suggest methods to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- Minimize the burden of the information collection on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, *e.g.,* permitting electronic submission of responses.

Documents related to this information collection request are available at *https://regulations.gov.* Questions about the information collection requirements may be directed to the person listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION** section of this notice.

III. Current Actions

This information collection request concerns the OWCP 1168 Provider Enrollment Form. OWCP has updated the data with respect to the number of respondents, responses, burden hours, and burden costs supporting this information collection request from the previous information collection request.

Type of Review: Revision of a currently approved collection.

Agency: Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, OWCP.

OMB Number: 1240–0021.

Affected Public: Public Sector.

Number of Respondents: 18,417.

*Number of Responses:*18,417.

Annual Burden Hours: 8,901.55 hours.

Annual Respondent or Recordkeeper Cost: $0.00.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the proposed information collection request; they will become a matter of public record and will be available at *https://www.reginfo.gov.*

Anjanette Suggs,

Certifying Officer.

[FR Doc. 2026–05321 Filed 3–17–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4510–CR–P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50–369 and 50–370; NRC–2026–1322]

Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC; McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2; Exemption

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Notice; issuance.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing an exemption in response to a request dated August 18, 2025, from Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC, to allow the use of AXIOM® fuel cladding at McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2. Current NRC regulations limit applicability to the use of fuel rod cladding with zircaloy or ZIRLO™.

DATES: The exemption was issued on March 10, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Please refer to Docket ID NRC–2026–1322 when contacting the NRC about the availability of information regarding this document. You may obtain publicly available information related to this document using any of the following methods:

- *Federal Rulemaking Website:* Go to *https://www.regulations.gov* and search for Docket ID NRC–2025–1322. Address questions about Docket IDs in *Regulations.gov* to Bridget Curran; telephone: 301–415–1003; email: *Bridget.Curran@nrc.gov.* For technical questions, contact the individual listed in the For **FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this document.
- *NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS):* You may obtain publicly available documents online in the ADAMS Public Documents collection at *https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html.* To begin the search, select ''Begin ADAMS Public Search.'' For problems with ADAMS, please contact the NRC's Public Document Room (PDR) reference staff at 1–800–397–4209, at 301–415–4737, or by email to *PDR.Resource@nrc.gov.* The exemption request dated August 18, 2025 is available in ADAMS under Accession No. ML25230A072.
- *NRC's PDR:* The PDR, where you may examine and order copies of publicly available documents, is open by appointment. To make an appointment to visit the PDR, please send an email to *PDR.Resource@nrc.gov* or call 1–800–397–4209 or 301–415–4737, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. eastern time (ET), Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Klos, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555–0001; telephone: 301–415–5136; email: *John.Klos@nrc.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The text of the exemption is attached.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Dated: March 16, 2026.

Lee Klos,

Project Manager, Plant Licensing Branch II–1, Division of Operating Reactor Licensing, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

Attachment—Exemption

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Docket No. 50–369, 50–370; Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC; McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2; Exemption

I. Background

Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC (Duke Energy, the licensee) is the holder of Renewed Facility Operating License Nos. NPF–9 and NPF–17, for McGuire Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2 (McGuire). The RFOL provides, among other things, that the facility is subject to all rules, regulations, and orders of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC, the Commission) now or hereafter in effect.

McGuire, Units 1 and 2, consists of a pressurized-water reactor located at the licensee's site in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

II. Request/Action

By application dated August 18, 2025 Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS), Accession No. ML25230A072, the licensee, pursuant to Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR), Section 50.12, ''Specific exemptions,'' requested an exemption from certain requirements of 10 CFR 50.46, ''Acceptance criteria for emergency core cooling systems for light-water nuclear power reactors,'' to allow the use of AXIOM® fuel cladding at McGuire.

The regulations in 10 CFR 50.46 are currently limited in applicability to the use of fuel rods with zircaloy or ZIRLO™ cladding. The special circumstances associated with the exemption request are that application of the regulation in this circumstance is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule.

III. Discussion

The regulation in 10 CFR 50.46(a)(1)(i) states, in part, that:

each boiling or pressurized light-water nuclear power reactor fueled with uranium oxide pellets within cylindrical zircaloy or

ZIRLO cladding must be provided with an emergency core cooling system (ECCS) that must be designed so that its calculated cooling performance following postulated loss-of-coolant accidents [LOCA] conforms to the criteria set forth in paragraph (b) of this section. ECCS cooling performance must be calculated in accordance with an acceptable evaluation model and must be calculated for a number of postulated loss-of-coolant accidents of different sizes, locations, and other properties sufficient to provide assurance that the most severe postulated loss-of-coolant, accidents are calculated.

Since 10 CFR 50.46 specifically refers to fuel with zircaloy or ZIRLO™ cladding, its application to fuel clads with materials other than zircaloy or ZIRLO™ requires an exemption from this section of the regulations.

The exemption request from the licensee relates solely to the types of fuel cladding materials specified in these regulations. As written, the regulations specify the use of zircaloy or ZIRLO™ cladding. Thus, an exemption to 10 CFR 50.46 is necessary to use cladding materials (*i.e.,* AXIOM®), other than zircaloy or ZIRLO™ cladding. The licensee's request does not propose to exempt McGuire from any other requirements of 10 CFR 50.46 regarding acceptance criteria, evaluation model features and documentation, reporting of changes or errors, etc.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 50.12, the NRC may, upon application by any interested person or upon its own initiative, grant exemptions from requirements of 10 CFR part 50 when: (1) the exemptions are authorized by law, will not present an undue risk to the public health and safety, and are consistent with the common defense and security, and (2) special circumstances are present. Under 10 CFR 50.12(a)(2), special circumstances are present when at least one of the following six conditions are met:

(i) Application of the regulation in the particular circumstances conflicts with other rules or requirements of the Commission; or

(ii) Application of the regulation in the particular circumstances would not serve the underlying purpose of the rule or is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule; or

(iii) Compliance would result in undue hardship or other costs that are significantly in excess of those contemplated when the regulation was adopted, or that are significantly in excess of those incurred by others similarly situated; or

(iv) The exemption would result in benefit to the public health and safety that compensates for any decrease in safety that may result from the grant of the exemption; or

(v) The exemption would provide only temporary relief from the applicable regulation and the licensee or applicant has made good faith efforts to comply with the regulation; or

(vi) There is present any other material circumstance not considered when the regulation was adopted for which it would be in the public interest to grant an exemption.

The licensee's proposed exemption request which would permit application of the requirements of 10 CFR 50.46 to fuel rods clad with AXIOM® at McGuire identifies, in particular, that the special circumstance associated with this exemption request is that the application of the regulation in this circumstance is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule.

The technical basis for the use of fuel cladding with AXIOM® in Pressurized Water Reactors (PWRs) is documented in Topical Report (TR) WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0, ''Westinghouse AXIOM® Cladding for Use in Pressurized Water Reactor Fuel,'' March 2023 (ML23089A066). This TR describes Westinghouse's evaluation for the use of the AXIOM® alloy in PWR fuel assemblies as a replacement for ZIRLO™ and Optimized ZIRLO™. This TR discusses material properties of AXIOM®, as well as its behavior under normal operation, anticipated transients, and postulated accident conditions.

As identified in TR WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0, the AXIOM® alloy is a proprietary niobium-bearing variant of zirconium. This material also has tin, vanadium, and copper as alloying elements. Westinghouse stated that the AXIOM® alloy was developed to provide enhanced performance with respect to corrosion, hydrogen pickup, growth, and creep. While demonstrating relevant differences in certain material properties and physical behavior, TR WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0 identifies that the basic physical properties of AXIOM® are similar to ZIRLO™.

In TR WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0, Section C, Submittal of Topical Report, Sections 3.11, ''Post Quench Ductility,'' 3.12, ''Breakaway Oxidation,'' and 6.2.1.4, ''Fuel Clad Wear,'' Westinghouse states the rationale for concluding that each of the acceptance criteria in 10 CFR 50.46 is applicable to fuel clad with AXIOM®.

As documented in its safety evaluation onTR WCAP—8546NP–A, Revision 0, Section A, the NRC staff concluded that the criteria of 10 CFR 50.46 are acceptable for the application of AXIOM® cladding. The TR's Section A also states the technical basis for the NRC staff's conclusions in support of the AXIOM® alloy is the testing and analysis that Westinghouse had performed. Despite finding application of 10 CFR 50.46 to AXIOM® acceptable from a technical perspective, current regulations in 10 CFR 50.46 are limited in applicability to the use of fuel rods with zircaloy or ZIRLO™ cladding; therefore, an exemption for use of a new cladding material (such as AXIOM®), is required.

A. The Exemption Is Authorized by Law

The NRC has the authority under 10 CFR 50.12 to grant exemptions from the requirements of 10 CFR part 50 if the justification demonstrates it is authorized by law. The AXIOM® fuel that will be irradiated at McGuire is clad with a zirconium-based alloy that is not expressly within the scope of 10 CFR 50.46. However, the NRC staff considers all other aspects of these regulations (*e.g.,* acceptance criteria, prescribed methods, reporting requirements) applicable to the AXIOM® cladding material, and the licensee states that it will ensure that these regulations are satisfied for operation with fuel clad with AXIOM®. The NRC staff determined that granting the exemption from 10 CFR 50.46 related to AXIOM®, which is neither zircaloy nor ZIRLO™, will not result in a violation of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, or the NRC's regulations. Therefore, the exemption is authorized by law.

B. The Exemption Presents No Undue Risk To Public Health and Safety

In its submittal dated August 18, 2025, the licensee stated,

The reload evaluations will ensure that acceptance criteria are met for future reload cores after the transition to fuel rods clad with AXIOM material. Fuel assemblies using AXIOM fuel rod cladding will be evaluated using NRC-approved analytical methods and plant-specific models to address the changes in the cladding material properties. The safety analyses for CNS U1 and MNS are supported by the applicable site-specific TSs [Technical Specifications]. Reload cores are required to be operated in accordance with the operating limits specified in the TSs. Thus, the granting of this exemption request will not pose an undue risk to public health and safety.

The NRC staff's previous review of TR WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0, which concerns the properties of the AXIOM® alloy, provides assurance that predicted chemical, thermal, and mechanical characteristics of AXIOM®-alloy cladding are acceptable under normal operation, anticipated transients, and postulated accidents. The NRC staff finds that by utilizing the methods and properties stated in TR WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0, Section A the licensee meets the acceptance criteria and analytical methods in 10 CFR 50.46, and thus, ensures acceptable safety margins for fuel clad with AXIOM® that are consistent with those the Commission has established for zircaloy and ZIRLO™. McGuire's cores involving AXIOM® cladding will continue to be subject to the operating limits specified in the technical specifications and core operating limits report. The licensee will manage core reloads of fuel with AXIOM® cladding using NRC-approved analytical methods and plant TS. Thus, granting this exemption request will not pose undue risk to public health and safety.

C. The Exemption Is Consistent With the Common Defense and Security

The exemption will allow the licensee to use an enhanced fuel rod cladding material relative to the zircaloy material for which the requirements of 10 CFR 50.46 were originally established. The NRC staff concluded in TR WCAP–18546NP–A, Revision 0, Section A that the use of AXIOM® fuel rod cladding at McGuire will not significantly affect plant operations and is therefore consistent with the common defense and security. Further, the exemption does not involve security requirements and does not create a security risk. Special nuclear material in these fuel assemblies will be controlled using NRC-approved analytical methods, plant-specific models, and approved station procedures. Therefore, the exemption is consistent with the common defense and security.

D. Special Circumstances

Special circumstances, in accordance with 10 CFR 50.12(a)(2)(ii), are present whenever application of the regulation in the particular circumstances would not serve the underlying purpose of the rule or is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of the rule. The underlying purpose of 10 CFR 50.46 is to establish acceptance criteria for ECCS performance.

The regulations in 10 CFR 50.46 do not explicitly apply to fuel clad with AXIOM®. However, the underlying purpose of 10 CFR 50.46 is to provide requirements capable of ensuring adequate core cooling during and after the most limiting postulated LOCA. As discussed above, Westinghouse has demonstrated in an NRC-approved TR (*i.e.,* TR WCAP–18546NP–A) that application of the acceptance criteria and analytical methods required in 10 CFR 50.46 to fuel cladding with AXIOM® is acceptable. For the maximum local oxidation limit in 50.46(b)(2), Westinghouse meets the 17 percent limit in the rule for cladding without any hydrogen but further justified the use of an alternative limit that the NRC finds acceptable for maintaining post quench ductility during a postulated LOCA. The licensee stated that the McGuire LOCA analysis for the fuel assemblies with AXIOM® cladding was performed using the Full Spectrum LOCA evaluation model and adheres to the limitations of the associated topical reports. Therefore, strict application of the material-specific requirements for fuel cladding in 10 CFR 50.46 is not necessary to achieve the underlying purpose of ensuring adequate core cooling in this instance. Furthermore, granting an exemption to allow application of the balance of these regulations for fuel cladding with AXIOM® at McGuire, Units 1 and 2, would be consistent with the underlying regulatory purpose.

E. Environmental Considerations

The exemption requested by the licensee includes changes to requirements with respect to installation or use of a facility component located within the restricted area. The NRC staff determined that the exemption meets the eligibility criteria for the categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9) because the granting of this exemption involves: (i) no significant hazards consideration, (ii) no significant change in the types or a significant increase in the amounts of any effluents that may be released offsite, and (iii) no significant increase in individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Therefore, in accordance with 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the NRC's consideration of this exemption request. The basis for the NRC staff's determination of each of the requirements in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9) is discussed below.

Requirements in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9)(i)—There Is No Significant Hazards Consideration

The NRC staff evaluated the issue of no significant hazards consideration using the standards described in 10 CFR 50.92(c), as presented below:

1. Does the proposed exemption involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated?

Response: No.

The proposed exemption to allow the use of AXIOM® fuel rod cladding does not involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated.

For the set of previously evaluated accidents, their probability is governed by the failure or malfunction of equipment or components other than the fuel rod cladding. The fuel rod cladding itself is not an accident initiator and does not affect the accident probability. Therefore, the change in fuel rod cladding material does not affect the probability of previously evaluated accidents. The proposed exemption does not involve a significant increase in the consequences of previously evaluated accidents. This conclusion is demonstrated by the analysis submitted by the licensee in support of the proposed use of AXIOM® cladding that the NRC staff has reviewed in support of the proposed license amendment. The licensee's analysis shows that fuel clad with AXIOM® material performs comparably to fuel cladding materials that have been used previously. This satisfies the acceptance criteria in 10 CFR 50.46(b) for the LOCA event.

Therefore, the proposed exemption does not involve a significant increase in the probability or consequences of an accident previously evaluated.

2. Does the proposed exemption create the possibility of a new or different kind of accident from any accident previously evaluated?

Response: No.

The use of AXIOM® fuel rod cladding does not create the possibility of a new or different kind of accident from any previously evaluated. The fuel rod cladding is not an accident initiator. The use of AXIOM® cladding has been assessed by the licensee and vendor, and it has been found to exhibit comparable or enhanced behavior relative to the zircaloy and ZIRLO™ cladding material specifically identified in 10 CFR 50.46. The NRC staff has previously reviewed this information in its safety evaluation approving TR WCAP–18546NP–A. Use of Westinghouse fuel with AXIOM® cladding in the McGuire reactor cores is compatible with the plant design and does not introduce any new safety functions for plant structures, systems, or components. Furthermore, the introduction of AXIOM® cladding does not affect any accident mitigation systems and does not introduce any new accident initiation methods.

Therefore, the proposed exemption does not create the possibility of a new or different kind of accident from any previously evaluated.

3. Does the proposed exemption involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety?

Response: No.

The proposed exemption does not involve a significant reduction in the margin of safety. The licensee's analysis of the spectrum of postulated LOCA events for fuel rods clad with AXIOM® exhibits results comparable to those for the fuel currently in use at McGuire for the small-break and the large-break LOCA events. Furthermore, the fuel vendor has generically evaluated the performance of AXIOM® cladding relative to the zircaloy cladding specifically identified in 10 CFR 50.46. The vendor concluded that the performance of the AXIOM® cladding material is quite similar to or enhanced relative to the ZIRLO™ cladding material. The NRC staff has performed a review of these conclusions and documented in its safety evaluation on TR WCAP–18546NP–A that the AXIOM® material properties and mechanical design methodology are in accordance with applicable regulations and regulatory guidance.

Therefore, the proposed exemption does not involve a significant reduction in a margin of safety.

The NRC staff concludes that the proposed exemption presents no significant hazards consideration under the standards set forth in 10 CFR 50.92(c), and, accordingly, a finding of no significant hazards consideration is justified (*i.e.,* satisfies the provision of 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9)(i)).

Requirements in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9)(ii)—There Is No Significant Change in the Types or Significant Increase in the Amounts of Any Effluents That May Be Released Offsite

The proposed exemption would allow the use of AXIOM® fuel rod cladding material in the reactors. AXIOM cladding has similar properties and performance characteristics as the currently licensed optimized ZIRLO™ cladding. Therefore, the use of the AXIOM® fuel rod cladding material will not significantly change the types of effluents, nor significantly increase the amount of effluents that may be released offsite. Therefore, the provision of 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9)(ii) is satisfied.

Requirements in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9)(iii)—There Is No Significant Increase in Individual or Cumulative Occupational Radiation Exposure

The proposed exemption would allow the use of the AXIOM® fuel rod cladding material in the reactors. AXIOM® cladding has similar properties and performance characteristics as the currently licensed optimized ZIRLO™ cladding. Therefore, the use of the AXIOM® fuel rod cladding material will not significantly increase individual occupational radiation exposure, or significantly increase cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Therefore, the provision of 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9)(iii) is satisfied.

The NRC staff concludes that the proposed exemption meets the eligibility criteria for the categorical exclusion set forth in 10 CFR 51.22(c)(9). Therefore, in accordance with 10 CFR 51.22(b), no environmental impact statement or environmental assessment need be prepared in connection with the NRC's proposed granting of this exemption.

IV. Conclusions

Accordingly, the Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.12, the exemption is authorized by law, will not present an undue risk to the public health and safety, and is consistent with the

common defense and security. Also, special circumstances are present. Therefore, the Commission hereby grants Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC's request for an exemption from the specific requirements of 10 CFR 50.46 for use of AXIOM® fuel rod cladding.

This exemption is effective upon issuance.

Dated: March 10, 2026.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

/RA/

Aida Rivera-Varona,

Acting Director Division of Operating Reactor Licensing, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 2026–05254 Filed 3–17–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket No. 50–255; NRC–2026–1354]

Palisades Energy, LLC; Palisades Nuclear Plant; Exemption

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Notice; issuance.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has issued an exemption in response to a request dated February 13, 2026, as supplemented by letters dated February 27, 2026, March 4, 2026, and March 9, 2026, from Palisades Energy, LLC. The exemption authorizes a one-time exemption for the Palisades Nuclear Plant to allow the use of the less restrictive work hour limitations described in the NRC regulations for a 60-day period starting on March 13, March 16, March 30, and April 4, 2026, for various covered individuals as described in the exemption.

DATES: The exemption was issued on March 13, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Please refer to Docket ID NRC–2026–1354 when contacting the NRC about the availability of information regarding this document. You may obtain publicly available information related to this document using any of the following methods:

- *Federal Rulemaking Website:* Go to *https://www.regulations.gov* and search for Docket ID NRC–2026–1354. Address questions about Docket IDs in *Regulations.gov* to Bridget Curran; telephone: 301–415–1003; email: *Bridget.Curran@nrc.gov.* For technical questions, contact the individuals listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this document.
- *NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS):* You may obtain publicly available documents online in the ADAMS Public Documents collection at *https://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html.* To begin the search, select ''Begin ADAMS Public Search.'' For problems with ADAMS, please contact the NRC's Public Document Room (PDR) reference staff at 1–800–397–4209, at 301–415–4737, or by email to *PDR.Resource@nrc.gov.* The exemption request to authorize a one-time exemption for the Palisades Nuclear Plant to allow the use of the less restrictive work hour limitations is available in ADAMS under Accession No. ML26044A123. The supplements are available under Accession Nos. ML26058A024 ML26063A922, and ML26068A292, respectively.
- *NRC's PDR:* The PDR, where you may examine and order copies of publicly available documents, is open by appointment. To make an appointment to visit the PDR, please send an email to *PDR.Resource@nrc.gov* or call 1–800–397–4209 or 301–415–4737, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. eastern time (ET), Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Marlayna V. Doell, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555–0001; telephone: 301–415–3178; email: *Marlayna.Doell@nrc.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The text of the exemption is attached.

Dated: March 16, 2026.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Marlayna Doell,

Project Manager, Plant Licensing Branch III, Division of Operating Reactor Licensing, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

Attachment—Exemption

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Docket No. 50–255; Palisades Energy, LLC; Palisades Nuclear Plant; Exemption

I. Background

Palisades Energy, LLC (Palisades Energy, the licensee), is the holder of Renewed Facility Operating License No. DPR–20, which authorizes operation of the Palisades Nuclear Plant (Palisades). The license provides, among other things, that the facility is subject to all rules, regulations, and orders of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC, the Commission) now or hereafter in effect. The facility consists of one pressurized-water reactor located in Van Buren County, Michigan.

I. Request/Action

By letter dated February 13, 2026 (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) Accession No. ML26044A123), as supplemented by letters dated February 27, 2026 (ML26058A024), March 4, 2026 (ML26063A922), and March 9, 2026 (ML26068A292), the licensee requested a one-time exemption from the work hour requirements in Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 26, ''Fitness for Duty Programs,'' Section 26.205, ''Work hour controls,'' Paragraph (d), pursuant to 10 CFR 26.9, ''Specific exemptions.'' Specifically, the licensee requested to use the outage work hour controls in 10 CFR 26.205(d)(4) in lieu of the non-outage work hour controls described in 10 CFR 26.205(d)(3) and (d)(7) for various periods of no more than 60 days, or until Palisades is connected to the electrical grid, whichever occurs first, for individuals specified in Paragraphs (a)(2) and (a)(4) of 10 CFR 26.4, ''FFD [Fitness for duty] program applicability to categories of individuals.'' Within the request, as supplemented, the licensee requested one 60-day period; however, the starting dates for the period vary between the projects and groups of covered individuals. Personnel supporting the Fuel Handling Equipment (FHE) and Tesco projects will begin their 60-day period on March 13 and March 16, 2026, respectively, Health Physics personnel will begin their 60-day period on March 30, 2026, and personnel supporting all other restart activities will begin their 60-day period on April 4, 2026.

This exemption request follows the licensee's previously approved two exemption periods from the same work hour requirements. The first exemption period started on November 3, 2025, and expired on January 1, 2026. The second exemption period started on January 6, 2026, and expired on March 6, 2026.

Section 26.205(d)(3) of 10 CFR requires licensees to comply with the requirements for individuals to have a minimum number of days off per week depending on the duration of shift schedules, averaged over the shift cycle, and the duties being performed. Individuals working 8-hour shift schedules shall have at least 1 day off per week, and individuals who are working 10-hour shift schedules shall have at least 2 days off per week. Individuals working 12-hour shift schedules while performing the duties described in 10 CFR 26.4(a)(1) through (a)(3) shall have at least 2.5 days off per week and individuals working 12-hour shift schedules while performing duties described in 10 CFR 26.4(a)(4) shall have at least 2 days off per week. Section 26.205(d)(7) of 10 CFR, requires licensees to comply with the requirements for maximum average work hours wherein individuals may not work more than a weekly average of 54 hours, calculated using an averaging period of up to 6 weeks, which advances by 7 consecutive calendar days at the finish of every averaging period. The licensee seeks a one-time exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 26.205(d)(3) and (d)(7).

The requirements in 10 CFR 26.205(d)(4) provide that during the first 60 days of a unit outage, licensees need not meet the requirements of 10 CFR 26.205(d)(3) or (d)(7) for individuals specified in 10 CFR 26.4(a)(1) through (a)(4), while those individuals are working on outage activities. However, 10 CFR 26.205(d)(4) does require the licensee to ensure individuals specified in 10 CFR 26.4(a)(1) through (a)(3) have at least 3 days