

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 Catawba, Unit 1, 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 do 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 Catawba 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, or 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. 2026-05255 Filed 3-17-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590-01-P

## PENSION BENEFIT GUARANTY CORPORATION

### Proposed Submission of Information Collection for OMB Review; Comment Request; Direct Express Enrollment Form

**AGENCY:** Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to request OMB approval of information collection.

**SUMMARY:** The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) intends to request that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approve, under the Paperwork Reduction Act, a new collection of information. The purpose of the information collection is to obtain information necessary to enroll individuals in the Direct Express debit card program. This notice informs the public of PBGC's intent and solicits public comment on the collection of information.

**DATES:** Comments must be submitted on or before May 18, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- *Email:* [paperwork.comments@pbgc.gov](mailto:paperwork.comments@pbgc.gov). Refer to Direct Express Enrollment Form in the subject line.
- *Mail or Hand Delivery:* Legislative and Regulatory Division, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20024-2101.

Commenters are strongly encouraged to submit comments electronically. Commenters who submit comments on paper by mail should allow sufficient time for mailed comments to be received before the close of the comment period.

All submissions received must include the agency's name (Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or PBGC) and refer to the Direct Express Enrollment Form. All comments received will be posted without change to PBGC's website, [www.pbgc.gov](http://www.pbgc.gov), including any personal information provided. Do not submit comments that include any personally identifiable information (such as name, address, or other contact information) or confidential business information that you do not want publicly disclosed. Comments may be submitted anonymously.

Copies of the collection of information may be obtained without charge by writing to the Disclosure Division, ([disclosure@pbgc.gov](mailto:disclosure@pbgc.gov)), Office

of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20024-2101; or, calling 202-229-4040 during normal business hours. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Monica O'Donnell ([odonnell.monica@pbgc.gov](mailto:odonnell.monica@pbgc.gov)), Attorney, Legislative and Regulatory Division, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20024-2101; 202-229-8706. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Direct Express card is a prepaid debit card that federal benefit recipients can use to receive their benefits electronically and is administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury ("Treasury"). Federal benefit recipients do not need a bank account to sign up for the Direct Express card, and there is no credit check or minimum balance requirement.

Executive Order 14247 ("Modernizing Payments To and From America's Bank Account"), signed on March 25, 2025, requires the transition to electronic payments for all Federal disbursements and collections by digitizing payments to the extent permissible under the law. To comply with Executive Order 14247, PBGC will transition its recipients receiving paper checks to receiving their benefits electronically. These recipients can do so by providing their bank or credit union information or through using a Direct Express card.

For PBGC to enroll its payees currently receiving paper checks with the Direct Express card, PBGC must collect identifying information needed to set up the account. Those wishing to enroll also must certify that the information provided can be used to establish the Direct Express card account to receive benefit payments. PBGC will use the information it receives and coordinate with Treasury to set up the accounts. Treasury will issue the card authorized to receive PBGC payments to the benefit recipient, and then PBGC will use that account number to pay benefits electronically.

PBGC estimates that it will receive enrollment forms from approximately 10,000 benefit recipients in the first year, and approximately 2,000 per year in the following years, leading to an average of 4,667 forms per year over the next 3 years. PBGC estimates that it will take 10 minutes and \$0 for interested enrollees to complete this form.

Therefore, the total annual burden associated with this collection of information is estimated to be 778 hours and \$0 each year for the next 3 years.

PBGC intends to request that OMB approve PBGC's use of this form for 3 years. 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 OMB control number.

PBGC is soliciting public comments to—

- Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;
- Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodologies and assumptions used;
- Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- Minimize the burden of the collection of information 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.

**Joseph Krettek,**

*Assistant General Counsel, Legislative and Regulatory Division, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.*

[FR Doc. 2026-05260 Filed 3-17-26; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 7709-02-P**

## POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. MC2026-173 and K2026-173]

### New Postal Products

**AGENCY:** Postal Regulatory Commission.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Commission is noticing a recent Postal Service filing for the Commission's consideration concerning a negotiated service agreement. This notice informs the public of the filing, invites public comment, and takes other administrative steps.

**DATES:** *Comments are due:* March 23, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit comments electronically via the Commission's Filing Online system at <https://www.prc.gov>. Those who cannot submit comments electronically should contact the person identified in the **FOR FURTHER**

**INFORMATION CONTACT** section by telephone for advice on filing alternatives.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** David A. Trissell, General Counsel, at 202-789-6820.

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

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- I. Introduction
- II. Public Proceeding(s)
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#### I. Introduction

Pursuant to 39 CFR 3041.405, the Commission gives notice that the Postal Service filed request(s) for the Commission to consider matters related to Competitive negotiated service agreement(s). The request(s) may propose the addition of a negotiated service agreement from the Competitive product list or the modification of an existing product currently appearing on the Competitive product list.

The public portions of the Postal Service's request(s) can be accessed via the Commission's website (<http://www.prc.gov>). Non-public portions of the Postal Service's request(s), if any, can be accessed through compliance with the requirements of 39 CFR 3011.301.<sup>1</sup>

Section II identifies the docket number(s) associated with each Postal Service request, if any, that will be reviewed in a public proceeding as defined by 39 CFR 3010.101(p), the title of each such request, the request's acceptance date, and the authority cited by the Postal Service for each request. For each such request, the Commission appoints an officer of the Commission to represent the interests of the general public in the proceeding, pursuant to 39 U.S.C. 505 and 39 CFR 3000.114 (Public Representative). The Public Representative does not represent any individual person, entity or particular point of view, and, when Commission attorneys are appointed, no attorney-client relationship is established. Section II also establishes comment deadline(s) pertaining to each such request.

The Commission invites comments on whether the Postal Service's request(s) identified in Section II, if any, are consistent with the policies of title 39. Applicable statutory and regulatory requirements include 39 U.S.C. 3632, 39 U.S.C. 3633, 39 U.S.C. 3642, 39 CFR part 3035, and 39 CFR part 3041.

<sup>1</sup> See Docket No. RM2018-3, Order Adopting Final Rules Relating to Non-Public Information, June 27, 2018, Attachment A at 19-22 (Order No. 4679).