must consist of a specific statement of the issue of law or fact to be raised or controverted. In addition, the petitioner shall provide a brief explanation of the bases of the contention and a concise statement of the alleged facts or expert opinion which support the contention and on which the petitioner intends to rely in proving the contention at the hearing. The petitioner must also provide references to those specific sources and documents of which the petitioner is aware and on which the petitioner intends to rely to establish those facts or expert opinion. Petitioner must provide sufficient information to show that a genuine dispute exists with the applicant on a material issue of law or fact. Contentions shall be limited to matters within the scope of the amendment under consideration. The contention must be one which, if proven, would entitle the petitioner to relief. A petitioner who fails to file such a supplement which satisfies these requirements with respect to at least one contention will not be permitted to participate as a party.

Those permitted to intervene become parties to the proceeding, subject to any limitations in the order granting leave to intervene, and have the opportunity to participate fully in the conduct of the hearing, including the opportunity to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses.

A request for a hearing or a petition for leave to intervene must be filed with the Secretary of the Commission, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555–0001, Attention: Docketing and Services Branch, or may be delivered to the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, by the above date. Where petitions are filed during the last 10 days of the notice period, it is requested that the petitioner promptly so inform the Commission by a toll-free telephone call to Western Union at 1–(800) 248–5100 (in Missouri 1–(800) 342–6700). The Western Union operator should be given Datagram Identification Number N1023 and the following message addressed to John F. Stolz, Director, Project Directorate I–2: petitioner's name and telephone number; date petition was mailed; plant name; and publication date and page number of this **Federal Register** notice. A copy of the petition should also be sent to the Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555–0001, and to Jay Silberg, Esquire, Shaw, Pittman, Potts and Trowbridge, 2300 N Street NW., Washington, DC 20037, attorney for the licensee.

Nontimely filings of petitions for leave to intervene, amended petitions, supplemental petitions and/or requests for hearing will not be entertained absent a determination by the Commission, the presiding officer or the presiding Atomic Safety and Licensing Board that the petition and/or request should be granted based upon a balancing of the factors specified in 10 CFR 2.714(a)(1) (i)–(v) and 2.714(d).

If a request for a hearing is received, the Commission's staff may issue the amendment after it completes its technical review and prior to the completion of any required hearing if it publishes a further notice for public comment of its proposed finding of no significant hazards consideration in accordance with 10 CFR 50.91 and 50.92.

For further details with respect to this action, see the applications for amendment dated November 27, 1996, as supplemented February 12, 1997, which are available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room located at the Osterhout Free Library, Reference Department, 71 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 4th day of April 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

David H. Jaffe,

Senior Project Manager, Project Directorate I–2, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 97–9395 Filed 4–10–97; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50–387 and 50–388]

Pennsylvania Power and Light Company Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, Units 1 and 2 Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of an amendment to Facility Operating License Nos. DPR–14 and DPR–22, issued to Pennsylvania Power and Light Company (PP&L) (the licensee), for the operation of Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (SSES), Units 1 and 2, located at the licensee's site in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of the Proposed Action

The proposed amendment will add to the current SSES Technical Specifications (TSs) (Special Test Exception Section 3.10.7 and 3.10.8), the Improved Technical Specifications Sections (ITS) 3.10.3 and 3.10.4 in a modified format and with applicable cross references.

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's amendment request dated February 11, 1997.

The Need for the Proposed Action

It has been recognized that nuclear safety in all plants would benefit from improvement and standardization of TSs. The ''NRC Interim Policy Statement on Technical Specification Improvements for Nuclear Power Reactors,'' (52 FR 3788, February 6, 1987) and later the Final Policy Statement (58 FR 39132, July 22, 1993), formalized this need. To facilitate the development of individual ITS, each reactor vendor owners group (OG) and the NRC staff developed standard TS (STS). For General Electric (GE) plants, the STS are NUREG–1433 for BWR/4 reactor facilities and NUREG–1434 for BWR/6 facilities. NUREG–1433 formed the basis of the SSES ITS. The NRC Committee to Review Generic Requirements (CRGR) reviewed the STS and made note of the safety merits of the STS and indicated its support of conversion to the STS by operating plants.

Description of the Proposed Change

The February 11, 1997 submittal requested that two sections be approved prior to the staff approval of the entire ITS to adopt Sections 3.10.3 and 3.10.4 of the ITS into the current TS Special Test Exception Sections 3.10.3 and 3.10.4. This change will permit control rod testing during refueling outages. The only creditable accident associated with control rod testing during the refuel outage is the ''Rod Withdrawal Error—Low Power'' and is addressed in Section 15.4.1 of SSES Updated Final Safety Analysis Report (UFSAR).

The February 11, 1997 request is part of a larger amendment request submitted on August 1, 1996. The requests are based on NUREG–1433 and on guidance provided in the above-referenced Policy Statement. If granted, the amendments would completely rewrite, reformat, and streamline the existing TSs. Emphasis is placed on human factors principles to improve clarity and understanding. The Bases section would be significantly expanded to clarify and better explain the purpose

and foundation of each specification. In addition to NUREG–1433, portions of the existing TSs were also used as the basis for the ITS. Plant-specific issues (unique design features, requirements, and operating practices) were discussed at length with the licensee, and generic matters with the OGs.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

As stated above, the only plausible consequence of the proposed action is a rod withdrawal error during low power. The effects of such an error were analyzed in ''Rod Withdrawal Error-Low Power,'' Section 15.4.1 of the UFSAR. This analysis indicates that withdrawal of a single rod during refueling is insufficient to cause criticality and thus no radioactive materials would be released. The proposed change to the TSs does not change this conclusion.

Additionally, the proposed revision to the TS was found to provide control of plant operations, specifically control of rod movement during Conditions 3 and 4. Thus, reasonable assurance will be provided that the health and safety of the public will be adequately protected.

These TS changes will not increase the probability or consequences of accidents, no changes are being made in the types of any effluent that may be released offsite, and there is no significant increase in the allowable individual or cumulative occupational radiation exposure. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed TS amendment.

With regard to potential non-radiological impacts, the proposed amendment involves features located entirely within the restricted areas as defined in 10 CFR Part 20. It does not affect non-radiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Therefore, the Commission concludes that there are no significant non-radiological impacts associated with the proposed amendment.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action

The Commission has concluded there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed amendment. Any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact need not be evaluated. As an alternative to the proposed action, the staff considered denial of the proposed action. Denial of the application would result in no change in current environmental impacts. The environmental impacts of the proposed action and the no-action alternative action are similar.

Alternative Use of Resources

This action does not involve the use of any resources not considered previously in the Final Environmental Statement for the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, Units 1 and 2, dated June 1981.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on March 27, 1997, the staff consulted with the Pennsylvania State official, Mr. David Ney of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Bureau of Radiation Protection, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon the environmental assessment, the Commission concludes that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed action.

For further details with respect to this proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated February 11, 1997. The letter is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20555, and at the local public document room located at the Osterhout Free Library, Reference Department, 71 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 4th day April of 1997.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

John F. Stolz,

Director, Project Directorate I–2, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 97–9393 Filed 4–10–97; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Degradation of Control Rod Drive Mechanism Nozzle and Other Vessel Closure Head Penetrations; Issued

AGENCY: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

ACTION: Notice of issuance.

SUMMARY: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has issued Generic Letter 97–01 to notify all holders of operating licenses for pressurized water reactors (PWRs), except those who have permanently ceased operations and have certified that fuel has been permanently removed from the reactor vessel, of the need for information concerning their programs for ensuring the timely inspection of control rod drive mechanism (CRDM) and other vessel closure head penetrations. The information requested is needed by the NRC staff to verify compliance with 10 CFR 50.55a and 10 CFR Part 50, Appendix A, GDC 14, and to determine whether an augmented inspection program, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii), is required.

The proposed generic letter is a ''rule'' for purposes of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (5 U.S.C., Chapter 8). The staff has received confirmation from the Office of Management and Budget that the generic letter is a non-major rule.

This generic letter is available in the NRC Public Document Room under accession number 9703260336.

DATES: The generic letter was issued on April 1, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Not applicable.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: C. E. Carpenter, Jr. at (301) 415–2169.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The NRC staff has concluded that vessel closure head penetration (VHP) cracking does not pose an immediate or near term safety concern. In the long term, however, the degradation of CRDM nozzles and other VHPs is an important safety consideration that warrants further evaluation. The vessel closure head provides the vital function of maintaining reactor pressure boundary. Cracking in the VHPs has occurred and is expected to continue to occur as plants age. The NRC staff considers cracking of VHPs to be a safety concern for the long term based on the possibility of (1) Exceeding the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Code for margins if the cracks are sufficiently deep and continue to propagate during subsequent operating cycles, and (2) eliminating a layer of defense in depth for plant safety. Therefore, to verify that the margins required by the ASME Code, as specified in 10 CFR 50.55a are met, that the guidance of General Design Criterion 14 of Appendix A to 10 CFR Part 50 is continued to be satisfied, and to ensure that the safety significance of VHP cracking remains low, the NRC staff believes that an integrated, long-term program, which includes periodic inspections and monitoring of VHPs, is necessary. In addition, the NRC staff finds that the requested information is also needed to determine if the imposition of an augmented inspection program, pursuant to 10 CFR 50.55a(g)(6)(ii), is required to maintain public health and safety. The staff is not