material, personnel would be alerted to that fact and would take appropriate action. At a commercial nuclear power plant the inadvertent criticality with which 10 CFR 70.24 is concerned could occur during fuel handling operations. The special nuclear material that could be assembled into a critical mass at a commercial nuclear power plant is in the form of nuclear fuel; the quantity of other forms of special nuclear material that is stored on site in any given location is small enough to preclude achieving a critical mass. Because the fuel is not enriched beyond 5.0 weight percent Uranium-235 and because commercial nuclear plant licensees have procedures and design features that prevent inadvertent criticality, the staff has determined that it is unlikely that an inadvertent criticality could occur due to the handling of special nuclear material at a commercial power reactor. The requirements of 10 CFR 70.24, therefore, are not necessary to ensure the safety of personnel during the handling of special nuclear materials at commercial power reactors.

*Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action*

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that there is no significant environmental impact if the exemption is granted. Inadvertent or accidental criticality will be precluded through compliance with the Cooper Nuclear Station Technical Specifications (TSs), the design of the fuel storage racks providing geometric spacing of fuel assemblies in their storage locations, and administrative controls imposed on fuel handling procedures. TSs requirements specify reactivity limits for the fuel storage racks and minimum spacing between the fuel assemblies in the storage racks.

Appendix A of 10 CFR part 50, ''General Design Criteria for Nuclear Power Plants,'' Criterion 62, requires the criticality in the fuel storage and handling system shall be prevented by physical systems or processes, preferably by use of geometrically-safe configurations. This is met at Cooper Nuclear Station, as identified in the TSs and the Updated Safety Analysis Report (USAR). Cooper Nuclear Station TSs Section 5.5, Fuel Storage, states that, ''The new fuel storage vault shall be such that $K_{eff}$ dry is less than 0.90 and flooded is less than 0.95. These $K_{eff}$ limits are satisfied by maintaining the maximum, exposure-dependent $K_{\infty}$ of the individual fuel bundles ≤1.29.'' USAR Section X–2.0, New Fuel Storage, states that, ''The new fuel racks shall be designed with sufficient spacing between the new fuel assemblies to assure that under normal conditions (dry) the fully loaded array will have a $K_{eff}$ <0.90. Under abnormal conditions, in the event of complete flooding, the fully loaded array will have a $K_{eff}$ <0.95. * * * The analysis, which shows that the new fuel storage vault will have a $K_{eff}$ ≤0.90 dry and a $K_{eff}$ <0.95 flooded, provided the maximum exposure-dependent $K_{\infty}$ ≤1.31, has been approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a part of GESTAR II.'' Note: to provide further assurance, the Technical Specifications have a more conservative limit than the USAR.

The proposed exemption would not result in any significant radiological impacts. The proposed exemption would not affect radiological plant effluents nor cause any significant occupational exposures since the Technical Specifications, design controls (including geometric spacing of fuel assembly storage spaces) and administrative controls preclude inadvertent criticality. The amount of radioactive waste would not be changed by the proposed exemption.

The proposed exemption does not result in any significant nonradiological environmental impacts. The proposed exemption involves features located entirely within the restricted area as defined in 10 CFR part 20. It does not affect non-radiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant non-radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

*Alternatives to the Proposed Action*

Since the Commission has concluded that there is no measurable environmental impact associated with the proposed action, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact need not be evaluated. As an alternative to the proposed exemption, the staff considered denial of the requested exemption. Denial of the request 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 Related to the Operation of Cooper Nuclear Station'' dated February 1973.

*Agencies and Persons Consulted*

In accordance with its stated policy, on May 7, 1998, the staff consulted with Mr. John Fassell, Health Physicist, of the Nebraska Department of Health, 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 the proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated February 23, 1998, which is available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, which is located at The Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and at the local public document room located at the Auburn Memorial Library, 1810 Courthouse Avenue, Auburn, NE 68305.

Dated at Rockville, Md., this 14th day of May 1998.

For The Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

**James R. Hall,**

*Senior Project Manager, Project Directorate IV–1, Division of Reactor Projects III/IV, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.*

[FR Doc. 98–13509 Filed 5–20–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

---

## NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

**[Docket No. 50–397]**

## Washington Public Power Supply System, Nuclear Project No. 2 (WNP–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 No. NPF–21 issued to Washington Public Power Supply System (the licensee), for operation of WNP–2 located in Benton County, Washington.

**Environmental Assessment**

*Identification of the Proposed Action*

The proposed action would revise the maximum yield strength for emergency core cooling system suction strainer materials listed in the WNP–2 Final Safety Analysis Report (FSAR).

The proposed action is in accordance with the licensee's application for amendment dated April 16, 1998, as supplemented by letters dated April 28 and May 8, 1998.

*The Need for the Proposed Action*

The proposed action is needed to support the progression to startup for WNP–2, which is currently in a refueling outage. During this outage newly designed suction strainers have been installed in the suppression pool. They are designed to protect ECCS pumps from fibrous or other material that could be transported to the suppression pool after a design basis accident such as a loss of coolant accident. The licensee determined after fabrication of these strainers that the stanless steel material had measured yield strength which exceeded the limit which was specified in the FSAR. Excessive yield strength can make the stainless steel susceptible to stress corrosion cracking (SCC) under certain environmental conditions. The licensee identified this as an unreviewed safety issue and submitted an amendment request which would change the yield strength for the installed strainers. Approval of this amendment will enable the licensee to change reactor mode and declare the strainers operable while progressing to startup and full power operation.

*Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action*

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and, based on the testing and analytical information provided by the licensee, concludes that the increase in yield strength for the specific material used in the suction strainers is acceptable. The licensee has an effective cleanup system for the suppression pool, which maintains a desired level of water cleanliness sufficient to avoid conditions that would support SCC. Further, the licensee has conducted a fracture mechanics analysis and has determined that cracking in the surface martensitic structure of the strainers will not propagate to a critical size and, thus, not jeopardize the strainers' safety related function of protecting the ECCS pumps and spray nozzles. Also, the licensee's analysis has demonstrated that the strainers have adequate structural integrity to preclude failure when the forces of design basis hydrodynamic loads are applied. Lastly, a Strauss test using actual strainer material samples demonstrated acceptable stress corrosion cracking resistance.

The staff has concluded that this change 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 the allowable offsite or occupational radiation exposure. Accordingly, the Commission concludes that there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed action does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other environmental impact.

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

*Alternatives to the Proposed Action*

Since the Commission has concluded there is no significant environmental impact associated with the proposed action, 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 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 WNP–2.

*Agencies and Persons Consulted*

In accordance with its stated policy, on May 13, 1998, the staff consulted with the Washington State official, Mr. R. Cowley of the Department of Health, State of Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council, 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 the proposed action, see the licensee's letter dated April 16, 1998, as supplemented by letters dated April 28, 1998, and May 8, 1998, 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 Richmond Public Library, 955 Northgate Street, Richland, Washington 99352.

Dated at Rockville, MD., this 14th day of May 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

**Chester Poslusny,**

*Senior Project Manager, Project Directorate IV–2, Division of Reactor Projects—III/IV, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.*

[FR Doc. 98–13504 Filed 5–20–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

---

## NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

### Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, Subcommittee Meeting on Thermal-Hydraulic Phenomena; Notice of Meeting

The ACRS Subcommittee on Thermal-Hydraulic Phenomena will hold a meeting on June 11–12, 1998, Room T–2B1, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland.

Portions of the meeting will be closed to public attendance to discuss Westinghouse Electric Company proprietary information pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(4).

The agenda for the subject meeting shall be as follows:

*Thursday, June 11, 1998—8:30 a.m. until the conclusion of business.*

*Friday, June 12, 1998—8:30 a.m. until the conclusion of business.*

The Subcommittee will continue its review of the Westinghouse AP600 Test and Analysis Program (TAP) in support of the AP600 design certification. During this meeting, the Subcommittee will focus its review on the issues associated with the Westinghouse TAP for the Passive Containment System, including those identified in the February 19, 1998 ACRS letter to the NRC Executive Director for Operations. The purpose of this meeting is to gather information, analyze relevant issues and facts, and to formulate proposed positions and actions, as appropriate, for deliberation by the full Committee.

Oral statements may be presented by members of the public with the concurrence of the Subcommittee Chairman; written statements will be accepted and made available to the Committee. Electronic recordings will be permitted only during those portions of the meeting that are open to the public, and questions may be asked only by members of the Subcommittee, its consultants, and staff. Persons desiring to make oral statements should notify the cognizant ACRS staff engineer named below five days prior to the meeting, if possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

During the initial portion of the meeting, the Subcommittee, along with