open-circuit, dual-purpose, pressure-demand SCBAs constructed of brass components which were originally intended for use with compressed air. The licensee qualified the Model 401 cylinders for use with 35% oxygen/65% nitrogen following the recommendations of the Compressed Gas Association's Pamphlet C–10, Recommended Procedures for Changes of Gas Service for Compressed Gas Cylinders, which established procedures to utilize these devices with an enriched oxygen mixture. The licensee is currently using these SCBAs with 35% oxygen/65% nitrogen instead of compressed air. The MSA Model 401 SCBA has received the NIOSH/MSHA certification for use with compressed air, but has not been tested for 35% enriched oxygen applications. Using these SCBAs without the NIOSH/MSHA certification covering such applications requires an exemption from 10 CFR 20.1703(a)(1), 10 CFR 20.1703(c) and 10 CFR Part 20, Appendix A, Protection Factors for Respirators, Footnote d.2.(d).

IV

Pursuant to 10 CFR 20.1703(a)(2), SCBAs that have not been tested or certified or for which certification has not been extended by NIOSH/MSHA require a demonstration by testing or reliable test information that the material and performance characteristics of the equipment are capable of providing the proposed degree of protection under anticipated conditions of use. VEPCO contracted with National Aeronautic and Space Administration's (NASA) White Sand Test Facility (WSTF) and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to conduct applicable oxygen compatibility testing. WSTF evaluated the compatibility of the MSA Custom 4500 SCBA (testing of the model ''MSA Custom 4500'' envelops the lower pressure applications of models ''MSA Ultralite'' and ''Model 401'') with an oxygen-enriched breathing gas mixture. Based on these evaluations, the licensee concluded that compatibility exists provided (1) all hydrocarbon contamination is removed, (2) the SCBAs are maintained so as to preclude the introduction of hydrocarbon contamination, and (3) the temperature of the system does not exceed 135° F when the regulator is first activated. LLNL also concluded that an MSA Custom 4500, equipped with the interchangeable silicone facepiece, meets the National Fire Protection Association Flame and Heat Test requirements whether operated with 35% oxygen/65% nitrogen breathing gas mixture or with compressed air.

The licensee has indicated that the above conditions are met as follows: (1) the MSA repair guidance which is followed stipulates that no hydrocarbon-based compounds are to be used within the pressure boundary during maintenance, (2) the SCBAs are stored and repaired in clean, dry locations free of chemical contamination, (3) containment average temperature, required by Technical Specification, is less than or equal to 125°F at SPS 1&2, and (4) under VEPCO procedural guidance, SCBAs using 35% oxygen/65% nitrogen breathing gas mixture are equipped with a silicone facepiece. VEPCO has also stated that it has over 20 years of actual safe operating experience using SCBAs with 35% oxygen/65% nitrogen mixture with no incidents of oxygen-induced failure or equipment maintenance problems associated with the enriched oxygen operation.

The combination of the existing NIOSH/MSHA certification of the SCBAs (with compressed air), the testing of the SCBA with the enriched oxygen-nitrogen mixture conducted for VEPCO by NASA and LLNL, and VEPCO's safe use history constitutes an adequate basis for granting the requested exemption to permit the use of MSA SCBAs Model 401, Custom 4500 and Ultralite with 35% oxygen-65% nitrogen breathing air mixture in the sub-atmospheric containments of SPS, Units 1 and 2.

V

Accordingly, the Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 20.2301, the requested exemption is authorized by law, and will not result in undue hazard to life or property. Therefore, the Commission hereby grants the requested exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 20.1703(a)(1), 10 CFR 20.1703(c) and 10 CFR Part 20, Appendix A, Footnote d.2.(d), for Surry Power Station, Unit 1 and Unit 2, provided VEPCO uses SCBAs identified and meeting the formal testing outlined above and follows the above described conditions.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the granting of this exemption will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (63 FR 45097).

This exemption is effective upon issuance.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 3rd day of September 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Samuel J. Collins,

Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 98–24460 Filed 9–10–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Use of PRA in Plant-Specific Reactor Regulatory Activities: Final Regulatory Guide and Standard Review Plan Section; Availability

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued three new guides in its Regulatory Guide Series, along with two conforming sections of the Standard Review Plan. The guides are Regulatory Guide 1.175, ''An Approach for Plant-Specific, Risk-Informed, Decisionmaking: Inservice Testing''; Regulatory Guide 1.176, ''An Approach for Plant-Specific, Risk-Informed Decisionmaking: Graded Quality Assurance''; and Regulatory Guide 1.177, ''An Approach for Plant-Specific, Risk-Informed Decisionmaking: Technical Specifications.'' The revised sections of NUREG–0800, ''Standard Review Plan,'' are Chapter 3.9.7, ''Standard Review Plan for Risk-Informed Decisionmaking: Inservice Testing,'' and Chapter 16.1, ''Standard Review Plan for Risk-Informed Decisionmaking: Technical Specifications.'' Together with Regulatory Guide 1.174, ''An Approach for Using Probabilistic Risk Assessment in Risk-Informed Decisions on Plant-Specific Changes to the Licensing Basis,'' and the accompanying Chapter 19 of the Standard Review Plan, ''Use of Probabilistic Risk Assessment in Plant-Specific, Risk-Informed Decisionmaking: General Guidance,'' these documents provide the basic framework for an acceptable approach for use by power reactor licensees in preparing proposals for plant-specific changes to their licensing bases using risk information as a partial basis.

Comments and suggestions in connection with items for inclusion in guides currently being developed or improvements in all published guides are encouraged at any time. Written comments may be submitted to the Rules and Directives Branch, Division of Administrative Services, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555.

Single copies of regulatory guides, both active and draft, may be obtained free of charge by writing the Reproduction and Distribution Services Section, OCIO, USNRC, Washington, DC

20555–0001; or by fax to (301) 415–2289; or by email to GRW1@NRC.GOV. The SRP sections of NUREG–0800 may be purchased from the U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 37082, Washington, DC 20402–9328 (telephone (202) 512–2249). Active guides may be purchased from the National Technical Information Service on a standing order basis. Details on this service may be obtained by writing NTIS, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161. NTIS also sells single copies of NUREG-series documents. Copies of regulatory guides and the Standard Review Plan sections are available for inspection or copying for a fee from the NRC Public Document Room at 2120 L Street NW., Washington, DC; the PDR's mailing address is Mail Stop LL–6, Washington, DC 20555; telephone (202) 634–3273; fax (202) 634–3343. Regulatory guides are not copyrighted, and Commission approval is not required to reproduce them.

Background

On August 16, 1995, the Commission published in the **Federal Register** a final policy statement on the Use of Probabilistic Risk Assessment Methods in Nuclear Regulatory Activities (60 FR 42622). The policy statement included the following policy regarding expanded NRC use of PRA:

- The use of PRA technology should be increased in all regulatory matters to the extent supported by the state of the art in PRA methods and data and in a manner that complements the NRC's deterministic approach and supports the NRC's traditional defense-in-depth philosophy.
- PRA and associated analyses (e.g., sensitivity studies, uncertainty analyses, and importance measures) should be used in regulatory matters, where practical within the bounds of the state of the art, to reduce unnecessary conservatism associated with current regulatory requirements, regulatory guides, license commitments, and staff practices. Where appropriate, PRA should be used to support proposals for additional regulatory requirements in accordance with 10 CFR 50.109 (Backfit Rule). Appropriate procedures for including PRA in the process for changing regulatory requirements should be developed and followed. It is, of course, understood that the intent of this policy is that existing rules and regulations shall be complied with unless these rules and regulations are revised.
- PRA evaluations in support of regulatory decisions should be as realistic as practicable and appropriate supporting data should be publicly available for review.
- The Commission's safety goals for nuclear power plants and subsidiary numerical objectives are to be used with appropriate consideration of uncertainties in making regulatory judgments on the need for proposing and backfitting new generic requirements on nuclear power plant licensees.

It was the Commission's intent that implementation of this policy statement would improve the regulatory process in three areas:

1. Enhancement of safety decisionmaking by the use of PRA insights,
2. More efficient use of agency resources, and
3. Reduction in unnecessary burdens on licensees.

In parallel with the development of Commission policy on uses of risk assessment methods, the NRC developed an agency-wide implementation plan for application of probabilistic risk assessment insights within the regulatory process (SECY–95–079). This implementation plan included tasks to develop the series of regulatory guides that is the subject of this notice. In June 1997, the regulatory guides and SRP sections were issued in draft for public comment. A discussion of the comments received and their disposition, as well as SECY–95–079, may be obtained from the NRC Public Document Room at 2120 L Street NW., Washington, DC; the PDR's mailing address is Mail Stop LL–6, Washington, DC 20555; telephone (202) 634–3273; fax (202) 634–3343. (5 U.S.C. 552(a))

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 28th day of August 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Margaret V. Federline,

Deputy Director, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research.

[FR Doc. 98–24458 Filed 9–10–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Notice of Issuance of Final Design Approval and Final Safety Evaluation Report: Westinghouse Electric Company AP600 Standard Design

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a final design approval (FDA) to Westinghouse Electric Company for the AP600 standard design pursuant to 10 CFR Part 52, Appendix O. This FDA allows the AP600 standard design to be referenced in an application for a construction permit or operating license under 10 CFR Part 50, or an application for a combined license under 10 CFR Part 52. In addition, the Commission has issued the Final Safety Evaluation Report (FSER) that supports issuance of the FDA.

Issuance of this FDA signifies completion of the technical review phase of the application for certification of the AP600 design under Subpart B of 10 CFR Part 52. The NRC staff performed its technical review of the AP600 Standard Safety Analysis Report, Probabilistic Risk Assessment, and Tier 1 Material in accordance with the standards for review of design certification applications set forth in 10 CFR 52.48 that were applicable and technically relevant to the AP600 design or were modified by the exemptions identified in Section 1.6 of the NRC's FSER (NUREG–1512).

On the basis of its evaluation and independent analyses, as described in the FSER, the NRC staff concludes that Westinghouse's application for design certification meets the applicable portions of 10 CFR 52.47 and the review standards set forth above. In addition, the AP600 design is ready for the rulemaking phase, subject to satisfactory completion of the Enclosure 2 AP600 design control document (DCD). Therefore, the NRC staff and Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards will utilize the AP600 DCD and will rely on it in the rulemaking phase of the design certification review process pursuant to 10 CFR 52.51.

A copy of the AP600 FSER and FDA have been placed in the NRC's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, for review and copying by interested persons.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 3rd day of September 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Theodore R. Quay,

Director, Standardization Project Directorate, Division of Rector Program Management, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 98–24457 Filed 9–10–98; 8:45 am]

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PANAMA CANAL COMMISSION

Agency Information Collection Activities Under OMB Review

AGENCY: Panama Canal Commission

ACTION: Notice

SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104–13. 109 Stat. 163), the Panama Canal Commission hereby gives notice it