1220 Gallia Street, Portsmouth, Ohio 45662.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 30th day of November 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Carl J. Paperiello,

Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards.

[FR Doc. 98–32503 Filed 12–7–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket Nos. 50–269, 50–270, and 50–287]

Duke Energy Corporation; Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3; Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of amendments to Facility Operating License Nos. DPR–38, DPR–47, and DPR–55, issued to Duke Energy Corporation (the licensee), for operation of the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3, respectively, located in Oconee County, South Carolina.

Environmental Assessment

Identification of Proposed Action

The proposed action would amend the Oconee Facility Operating Licenses for Units 1, 2, and 3 to revise the Oconee Technical Specifications (TS) to be consistent with the Improved Standard Technical Specifications (ITS) conveyed by NUREG–1430, ''Standard Technical Specifications Babcock and Wilcox Plants,'' Revision 1, dated April 1995.

The proposed action is in response to the licensee's application for amendments dated October 28, 1997, as supplemented by letters dated March 26, May 20, July 29, August 13, October 1, October 21, October 28, and November 23, 1998.

The Need for the Proposed Action

It has been recognized that nuclear safety in all plants would benefit from improvement and standardization of the TS. The Commission's ''NRC Interim Policy Statement on Technical Specification Improvements for Nuclear Power Reactors'' (52 FR 3788, February 6, 1987), and later the Commission's ''Final Policy Statement on Technical Specification Improvements for Nuclear Power Reactors'' (Final Policy Statement) (58 FR 39132, July 22, 1993), formalized this need. To facilitate the development of individual improved TS, each reactor vendor owners' group (OG) and the NRC staff developed standard TS (STS). For Babcock and Wilcox plants, the STS are published as NUREG–1430, and this document was the basis for the new Oconee Units 1, 2, and 3, TS. The NRC Committee to Review Generic Requirements 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 Action

The proposed revision to the TS is based on NUREG–1430 and on guidance provided in the Final Policy Statement. Its objective is to completely rewrite, reformat, and streamline the existing TS. Emphasis is placed on human factors principles to improve clarity and understanding. The Bases section has been significantly expanded to clarify and better explain the purpose and foundation of each specification. In addition to NUREG–1430, portions of the existing TS 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.

The proposed changes from the existing TS can be grouped into four general categories, as follows:

1. Nontechnical (administrative) changes, which were intended to make the ITS easier to use. They are purely editorial in nature or involve the movement or reformatting of requirements without affecting technical content. Every section of the Oconee TS has undergone these types of changes. In order to ensure consistency, the NRC staff and the licensee have used NUREG–1430 as guidance to reformat and make other administrative changes.

2. Relocation of requirements, which includes items that were in the existing Oconee TS. The TS that are being relocated to licensee-controlled documents are not required to be in the TS under 10 CFR 50.36 requirements. They are not needed to obviate the possibility that an abnormal situation or event will give rise to an immediate threat to public health and safety. The NRC staff has concluded that appropriate controls have been established for all of the current specifications, information, and requirements that are being moved to licensee-controlled documents. In general, the proposed relocation of items in the Oconee TS to the Updated Final Safety Analysis Report, appropriate plant-specific programs, procedures, and ITS Bases follows the guidance of NUREG–1430. Once these items have been relocated by removing them from the TS to licensee-controlled documents, the licensee may revise them under the provisions of 10 CFR 50.59 or other NRC staff-approved control mechanisms, which provide appropriate procedural means to control changes.

3. More restrictive requirements, which consist of proposed Oconee ITS items that are either more conservative than corresponding requirements in the current Oconee TS, or are additional restrictions that are not in the existing Oconee TS, but are contained in NUREG–1430. Examples of more restrictive requirements include: placing a limiting condition for operation on plant equipment that is not required by the present TS to be operable; more restrictive requirements to restore inoperable equipment; and more restrictive surveillance requirements.

4. Less restrictive requirements, which are relaxations of corresponding requirements in the existing Oconee TS that provide little or no safety benefit and place unnecessary burdens on the licensee. These relaxations were the result of generic NRC actions or other analyses. They have been justified on a case-by-case basis for Oconee and will be described in the staff's Safety Evaluation to be issued in support of the license amendments.

In addition to the changes previously described, the licensee proposed certain changes to the existing TS that deviated from the STS in NUREG–1430. These additional proposed changes are described in the licensee's application and in the staff's Notice of Consideration of Issuance of Amendments to Facility Operating Licenses and Opportunity for a Hearing (62 FR 64405, dated December 5, 1997). Where these changes represent a change to the current licensing basis for Oconee, they have been justified on a case-by-case basis and will be described in the staff's Safety Evaluation to be issued in support of the license amendments.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

The Commission has completed its evaluation of the proposed action and concludes that the proposed TS conversion would not increase the probability or consequences of accidents previously analyzed and would not affect facility radiation levels or facility radiological effluents. Details of the staff's evaluation are provided in the safety evaluation accompanying the license amendments for the conversion.

Changes that are administrative in nature have been found to have no effect on the technical content of the TS, and are acceptable. The increased clarity

and understanding these changes bring to the TS are expected to improve the operator's control of the plant in normal and accident conditions.

Relocation of requirements to licensee-controlled documents does not change the requirements themselves. Future changes to these requirements may be made by the licensee under 10 CFR 50.59 or other NRC-approved control mechanisms, which ensures continued maintenance of adequate requirements. All such relocations have been found to be in conformance with the guidelines of NUREG–1430 and the Final Policy Statement, and, therefore, are acceptable.

Changes involving more restrictive requirements have been found to be acceptable and are likely to enhance the safety of plant operations.

Changes involving less restrictive requirements have been reviewed individually. When requirements have been shown to provide little or no safety benefit or to place unnecessary burdens on the licensee, their removal from the TS was justified. In most cases, relaxations previously granted to individual plants on a plant-specific basis were the result of a generic NRC action. Generic relaxations contained in NUREG–1430, as well as proposed deviations from NUREG–1430, have also been reviewed by the NRC staff and have been found to be acceptable.

In summary, the proposed revision to the TS was found to provide control of plant operations such that reasonable assurance will be provided so that the health and safety of the public will be adequately protected.

The proposed revision to the TS 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 occupational or public radiation exposure. Therefore, there are no significant radiological environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

With regard to potential nonradiological impacts, the proposed action involves does not affect nonradiological plant effluents and has no other nonradiological 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. The principal alternative to this action would be to deny the application (i.e., the ''no-action'' alternative). Such action would not reduce the environmental impacts of plant operations.

Alternative Use of Resources

This action did not involve the use of any resources not previously considered in the Final Environmental Statement related to the operation of the Oconee Nuclear Station, Units 1, 2, and 3, dated March 1972.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

In accordance with its stated policy, on November 30, 1998, the staff consulted with the South Carolina State official, Virgil R. Autry of the Bureau of Land and Waste Management, Department of Health and Environmental Control, regarding the environmental impact of the proposed action. The State official had no comments.

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 October 28, 1997, as supplemented by letters dated March 26, May 20, July 29, August 13, October 1, October 21, October 28, and November 23, 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 Oconee County Library, 501 West South Broad Street, Walhalla, South Carolina.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 2nd Day of December 1998.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Herbert N. Berkow,

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

[FR Doc. 98–32502 Filed 12–7–98; 8:45 am]

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Sunshine Act Meeting

AGENCY HOLDING THE MEETING: Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

DATE: Weeks of December 7, 14, 21, and 28, 1998.

PLACE: Commissioners' Conference Room, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland.

STATUS: Public and Closed.

MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED:

Week of December 7

Tuesday, December 8

10:00 a.m.
Briefing on EEO Program (Public Meeting) (Contact: Irene Little, 301–415–7380)

12:00 m.
Affirmation Session (Public Meeting) (if needed)

Week of December 14—Tentative

Tuesday, December 15

11:00 a.m.
Affirmation Session (Public Meeting) (if needed)

Week of December 21—Tentative

There are no meetings scheduled for the week of December 21, 1998.

Week of December 28—Tentative

There are no meetings scheduled for the week of December 28, 1998.

* The schedule for Commission meetings is subject to change on short notice. To verify the status of meetings call (recording)—(301) 415–1292.

CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION: Bill Hill (301) 415–1661.

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The NRC Commission Meeting Schedule can be found on the Internet at: http://www.nrc.gov/SECY/smj/schedule.htm.

This notice is distributed by mail to several hundred subscribers; if you no longer wish to receive it, or would like to be added to it, please contact the Office of Secretary, Attn: Operations Branch, Washington, D.C. 20555 (301–415–1661). In addition, distribution of this meeting notice over the Internet system is available. If you are interested in receiving this commission meeting schedule electronically, please send an electronic message to wmh@nrc.gov or dkw@nrc.gov.

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Dated: December 4, 1998.

William M. Hill, Jr.,

Secy Tracking Officer, Office of the Secretary.

[FR Doc. 98–32667 Filed 12–4–98; 2:06 p.m.

BILLING CODE 7590–01–M

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The National Partnership Council; Meeting

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.