considering the issuance of an order under 10 CFR 50.80 and 10 CFR 72.50 approving the transfer of operating authority under Facility Operating Licenses Nos. DPR–42 and DPR–60 for the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, Units 1 and 2, and Materials License No. SNM–2506 for the Prairie Island Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI), currently held by Northern States Power Company (NSP), as owner and licensed operator of Prairie Island, Units 1 and 2, and Prairie Island ISFSI. The transfer would be to a new operating company called Nuclear Management Company, LLC (NMC). The Commission is also considering amending the licenses for administrative purposes to reflect the proposed transfer.

By application dated November 24, 1999, seeking approval of the transfer, the Commission was informed that NSP has entered into Nuclear Power Plant Operating Services Agreements with NMC. Under these Agreements, NMC is to assume exclusive responsibility for the operation and maintenance of Prairie Island, Units 1 and 2, and Prairie Island ISFSI. NSP's ownership of Prairie Island, Units 1 and 2, and Prairie Island ISFSI will not be affected by the proposed transfer of operating authority, according to the application. Likewise, NSP's entitlement to capacity and energy from Prairie Island, Units 1 and 2, will not be affected by the transfer of operating authority. No physical changes to the facilities or operational changes are being proposed in the application.

The proposed amendments would reflect the transfer of authority under the licenses to operate Prairie Island, Units 1 and 2, and Prairie Island ISFSI from NSP to NMC.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 50.80 and 10 CFR 72.50, no license, or any right thereunder, shall be transferred, directly or indirectly, through transfer of control of the license, unless the Commission shall give its consent in writing. The Commission will approve an application for the transfer of a license, if the Commission determines that the proposed transferee is qualified to hold the license, and that the transfer is otherwise consistent with applicable provisions of law, regulations, and orders issued by the Commission pursuant thereto.

Before issuance of the proposed conforming license amendments, the Commission will have made findings required by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (the Act), and the Commission's regulations.

As provided in 10 CFR 2.1315, unless otherwise determined by the Commission with regard to a specific application, the Commission has determined that any amendment to the license of a utilization facility or the license of an independent spent fuel storage installation which does not more than conform the license to reflect the transfer action, involves respectively, ''no significant hazards consideration'' or ''no genuine issue as to whether the health and safety of the public will be significantly affected.'' No contrary determination has been made with respect to this specific license amendment application. In light of the generic determination reflected in 10 CFR 2.1315, no public comments with respect to significant hazards considerations are being solicited, notwithstanding the general comment procedures contained in 10 CFR 50.91.

The filing of requests for hearing and petitions for leave to intervene, and written comments with regard to the license transfer application, are discussed below.

By March 6, 2000, any person whose interest may be affected by the Commission's action on the application may request a hearing, and, if not the applicants, may petition for leave to intervene in a hearing proceeding on the Commission's action. Requests for a hearing and petitions for leave to intervene should be filed in accordance with the Commission's rules of practice set forth in subpart M, ''Public Notification, Availability of Documents and Records, Hearing Requests and Procedures for Hearings on License Transfer Applications,'' of 10 CFR part 2. In particular, such requests and petitions must comply with the requirements set forth in 10 CFR 2.1306, and should address the considerations contained in 10 CFR 2.1308(a). Untimely requests and petitions may be denied, as provided in 10 CFR 2.1308(b), unless good cause for failure to file on time is established. In addition, an untimely request or petition should address the factors that the Commission will also consider, in reviewing untimely requests or petitions, set forth in 10 CFR 2.1308(b)(1)–(2).

Requests for a hearing and petitions for leave to intervene should be served upon John H. O'Neill, Jr., counsel for NSP, at Shaw, Pittman, Potts, and Trowbridge, 2300 N Streeet, NW, Washington, DC 20037 (tel: 202–663–8148; fax: 202–663–8007; e-mail: john.o'neill@shawpittman.com); and the General Counsel, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555 (e-mail address for filings regarding license transfer cases only: OGCLT@NRC.gov); and the Secretary of the Commission, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555–0001, Attention: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff, in accordance with 10 CFR 2.1313.

The Commission will issue a notice or order granting or denying a hearing request or intervention petition, designating the issues for any hearing that will be held and designating the Presiding Officer. A notice granting a hearing will be published in the **Federal Register** and served on the parties to the hearing.

As an alternative to requests for hearing and petitions to intervene, by March 18, 2000, persons may submit written comments regarding the license transfer application, as provided for in 10 CFR 2.1305. The Commission will consider and, if appropriate, respond to these comments, but such comments will not otherwise constitute part of the decisional record. Comments should be submitted to the Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555–0001, Attention: Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff, and should cite the publication date and page number of this **Federal Register** notice.

For further details with respect to this action, see the application dated November 24, 1999, available for public inspection at the Commission's Public Document Room, the Gelman Building, 2120 L Street, NW., Washington, DC, and accessible electronically through the ADAMS Public Electronic Reading Room link at the NRC Web site (http://www.nrc.gov).

Dated at Rockville, Maryland this 7th day of February 2000.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Claudia M. Craig,

Chief, Section 1, Project Directorate III, Division of Licensing Project Management, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

[FR Doc. 00–3518 Filed 2–14–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

[Docket 72–1014]

Holtec International; Issuance of Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact Regarding the Request for Exemption From Requirements of 10 CFR Part 72

By letter dated January 12, 2000, Holtec International (Holtec or applicant) requested an exemption, pursuant to 10 CFR 72.7, from the requirements of 10 CFR 72.234(c). Holtec, located in Marlton, New Jersey, is seeking Nuclear Regulatory

Commission (NRC or the Commission) approval to fabricate three HI–STORM 100 overpacks, and one HI–TRAC–125 transfer cask prior to issuance of the Certificate of Compliance (CoC) for the HI–STORM 100 system. The HI–STORM 100 overpack and the HI—TRAC–125 transfer cask are basic components of the HI–STORM 100 system, a cask system designed for the dry storage of spent nuclear fuel. The HI–STORM 100 system is intended for use under the general license provisions of 10 CFR part 72, subpart K, by Southern Nuclear Operating Company at the Edwin I. Hatch Power Plant (Hatch), located in Baxley, Georgia.

Environmental Assessment (EA)

Identification of Proposed Action

By letter dated October 26, 1995, as supplemented, and pursuant to 10 CFR part 72, Holtec submitted an application to the NRC for a CoC for the HI–STORM 100 system. This application is currently under consideration by the NRC staff. The applicant is seeking Commission approval to fabricate three HI–STORM 100 overpacks and one HI–TRAC 100 transfer cask prior to the Commission's issuance of a CoC for the HI–STORM 100 system. The applicant requests an exemption from the requirements of 10 CFR 72.234(c), which state that ''Fabrication of casks under the Certificate of Compliance must not start prior to receipt of the Certificate of Compliance for the cask model.'' The proposed action before the Commission is whether to allow fabrication, including material procurement, prior to issuance of the CoC and to grant this exemption pursuant to 10 CFR 72.7.

Need for the Proposed Action

Holtec requested the exemption from 10 CFR 72.234(c) to ensure the availability of overpacks so that Hatch can continue loading dry storage casks as planned. Hatch plans to begin loading the three HI–STORM 100 systems in April 2001. Holtec has requested this exemption to allow Hatch sufficient time for training and pre-operational testing. To support Hatch's cask loading schedule, Holtec stated that it must begin fabrication activities in early April 2000; 3 months prior to the scheduled issuance of the HI–STORM 100 CoC, in July 2000.

The HI–STORM 100 application, dated October 26, 1995, is under consideration by the Commission. It is anticipated that, if approved, the HI–STORM–100 CoC may be issued by July 2000. The proposed fabrication exemption will not authorize use of the HI–STORM 100 overpacks to store spent fuel. That will occur only when, and if, a CoC is issued. NRC approval of the exemption request should not be construed as NRC's favorable consideration of Holtec's application for a CoC. Holtec will bear the risk of all activities conducted under the exemption, including the risk that the three HI–STORM 100 overpacks and one HI–TRAC–125 transfer cask that Holtec plans to construct may not be usable because they may not meet the specifications or conditions delineated in a CoC that the NRC may ultimately approve.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Regarding the fabrication exemption, the Environmental Assessment for the final rule, ''Storage of Spent Nuclear Fuel in NRC-Approved Storage Casks at Nuclear Power Reactor Sites'' (55 FR 29181 (1990)), considered the potential environmental impacts of overpacks which are used to store spent nuclear fuel under a CoC and concluded that there would be no significant environmental impacts. The proposed action now under consideration would not permit use of the overpacks, but would only permit fabrication. There are no radiological environmental impacts from fabrication since overpack fabrication does not involve radioactive materials. The major non-radiological environmental impacts involve use of natural resources due to overpack fabrication. Each HI–STORM 100 overpack weighs approximately 100 tons and is constructed of primarily metal and concrete. The HI–TRAC–125 transfer cask weighs approximately 125 tons and is made primarily of steel and lead. The amount of materials required to fabricate these components is expected to have very little impact on the associated industry. Fabrication of the metal components would be at a metal fabrication facility. Fabrication of the concrete overpacks would be partially done at a metal fabrication facility and completed by pouring the concrete at the Hatch site. The metal and concrete used in the fabrication of these components is insignificant compared to the amount of metal and concrete used in construction annually in the United States. If the components are not usable, the components could be disposed of or recycled. The amount of metal and concrete disposed of is insignificant compared to the amount of metal and concrete that is disposed of annually in the United States. Based upon this information, the fabrication of these components will have no significant impact on the environment since no radioactive materials are involved, and the amount of natural resources used is minimal.

Alternative to the Proposed Action

Since there is no significant environmental impact associated with the proposed actions, any alternatives with equal or greater environmental impact are not evaluated. The alternative to the proposed actions would be to deny approval of the exemption and, therefore, not allow fabrication until a CoC is issued. This alternative would have the same environmental impact.

Given that there are no significant differences in environmental impact between the proposed action and the alternative considered, and that the applicant has a legitimate need to fabricate the components prior to certification and is willing to assume the risk that any fabricated components may not be approved or may require modification, the Commission concludes that the preferred alternative is to grant an exemption from the prohibition on fabrication prior to receipt of a CoC.

Agencies and Persons Consulted

Mr. J. Setzer, Chief of Program Coordination, Department of Natural Resources, State of Georgia, was contacted about the Environmental Assessment for the proposed action and had no comments.

Finding of No Significant Impact

The environmental impacts of the proposed action have been reviewed in accordance with the requirements set forth in 10 CFR Part 51. Based upon the foregoing Environmental Assessment, the Commission finds that the proposed action of granting an exemption from 10 CFR 72.234(c) so that Holtec may fabricate three HI–STORM 100 overpacks and one HI–TRAC–125 transfer cask prior to issuance of a CoC will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, the Commission has determined not to prepare an environmental impact statement for the proposed exemption.

The request for the exemption from 10 CFR 72.234(c) was filed on January 12, 2000. For further details with respect to this action, see the application for CoC for the HI–STORM 100 system, dated October 26, 1995. On July 30, 1999, a preliminary Safety Evaluation Report and proposed CoC for the HI–STORM 100 system were issued by the NRC staff to initiate rulemaking to add the HI–STORM 100 system to the list of approved cask designs in 10 CFR

72.214. The exemption request and CoC application are docketed under Docket No. 72–1014. These documents are available for public review at the Commission's Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20555.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 8th day of February 2000.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

E. William Brach, Director,

Spent Fuel Project Office, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards.

[FR Doc. 00–3516 Filed 2–14–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7590–01–P

PENSION BENEFIT GUARANTY CORPORATION

Interest Assumption for Determining Variable-Rate Premium; Interest Assumptions for Multiemployer Plan Valuations Following Mass Withdrawal

AGENCY: Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

ACTION: Notice of interest rates and assumptions.

SUMMARY: This notice informs the public of the interest rates and assumptions to be used under certain Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation regulations. These rates and assumptions are published elsewhere (or are derivable from rates published elsewhere), but are collected and published in this notice for the convenience of the public. Interest rates are also published on the PBGC's web site (http://www.pbgc.gov).

DATES: The interest rate for determining the variable-rate premium under part 4006 applies to premium payment years beginning in February 2000. The interest assumptions for performing multiemployer plan valuations following mass withdrawal under part 4281 apply to valuation dates occurring in March 2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Harold J. Ashner, Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, 1200 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20005, 202–326–4024. (For TTY/TDD users, call the Federal relay service toll-free at 1–800–877–8339 and ask to be connected to 202–326–4024.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Variable-Rate Premiums

Section 4006(a)(3)(E)(iii)(II) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) and § 4006.4(b)(1) of the PBGC's regulation on Premium Rates (29 CFR part 4006) prescribe use of an assumed interest rate in determining a single-employer plan's variable-rate premium. The rate is the ''applicable percentage'' (currently 85 percent) of the annual yield on 30-year Treasury securities for the month preceding the beginning of the plan year for which premiums are being paid (the ''premium payment year''). The yield figure is reported in Federal Reserve Statistical Releases G.13 and H.15.

The assumed interest rate to be used in determining variable-rate premiums for premium payment years beginning in February 2000 is 5.64 percent (*i.e.*, 85 percent of the 6.63 percent yield figure for January 2000).

The following table lists the assumed interest rates to be used in determining variable-rate premiums for premium payment years beginning between March 1999 and February 2000.

For premium payment years beginning in:	The assumed interest rate is:
March 1999	4.56
April 1999	4.74
May 1999	4.72
June 1999	4.94
July 1999	5.13
August 1999	5.08
September 1999	5.16
October 1999	5.16
November 1999	5.32
December	5.23
January 2000	5.40
February 2000	5.64

Multiemployer Plan Valuations Following Mass Withdrawal

The PBGC's regulation on Duties of Plan Sponsor Following Mass Withdrawal (29 CFR part 4281) prescribes the use of interest assumptions under the PBGC's regulation on Allocation of Assets in Single-employer Plans (29 CFR part 4044). The interest assumptions applicable to valuation dates in March 2000 under part 4044 are contained in an amendment to part 4044 published elsewhere in today's **Federal Register**. Tables showing the assumptions applicable to prior periods are codified in appendix B to 29 CFR part 4044.

Issued in Washington, DC, on this 4th day of February, 2000.

David M. Strauss,

Executive Director, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

[FR Doc. 00–3459 Filed 2–14–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7708–01–P

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Excepted Service

AGENCY: Office of Personnel Management.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This gives notice of positions placed or revoked under Schedules A and B, and placed under Schedule C in the excepted service, as required by Civil Service Rule VI, Exceptions from the Competitive Service.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Director, Staffing Reinvention Office, Employment Service (202) 606–0830.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Personnel Management published its last monthly notice updating appointing authorities established or revoked under the Excepted Service provisions of 5 CFR 213 on December 27, 1999 (64 FR 72369). Individual authorities established or revoked under Schedules A and B and established under Schedule C between November 1, 1999, and December 31, 1999, appear in the listing below. Future notices will be published on the fourth Tuesday of each month, or as soon as possible thereafter. A consolidated listing of all authorities has been published June 30 of last year.

Schedule A

No Schedule A authorities were established or revoked during November or December 1999.

Schedule B

No Schedule B authorities were established or revoked during November or December 1999.

Schedule C

The following Schedule C authorities were established during November thru December 1999:

Broadcasting Board of Governors

Senior Advisor to the Director, International Broadcasting Bureau. Effective November 2, 1999.

Commission on Civil Rights

Special Assistant to the Commissioner. Effective November 5, 1999.

Department of Agriculture

Confidential Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, Office of Community Development. Effective November 1, 1999.

Confidential Assistant to the Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Effective November 3, 1999.