Commission may authorize a licensee to provide measures for protection against radiological sabotage provided the licensee demonstrates that the measures have ''the same high assurance objective'' and meet ''the general performance requirements'' of the regulation, and ''the overall level of system performance provides protection against radiological sabotage equivalent'' to that which would be provided by the regulation.

At the VCSNS site, unescorted access into protected areas is controlled through the use of a photograph on a combination badge and keycard (hereafter, referred to as badge). The security officers at the entrance station use the photograph on the badge to visually identify the individual requesting access. The badges for both licensee employees and contractor personnel who have been granted unescorted access are issued upon entrance at the entrance/exit location and are returned upon exit. The badges are stored and are retrievable at the entrance/exit location. In accordance with 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5), contractor individuals are not allowed to take badges offsite. In accordance with the plant's physical security plan, neither licensee employees nor contractors are allowed to take badges offsite.

Under the proposed system, each individual who is authorized for unescorted access into protected areas would have the physical characteristics of their hand (hand geometry) registered with their badge number in the access control system. When an individual enters the badge into the card reader and places the hand on the measuring surface, the system would record the individual's hand image. The unique characteristics of the extracted hand image would be compared with the previously stored template in the access control system to verify authorization for entry. Individuals, including licensee employees and contractors, would be allowed to keep their badges with them when they depart the site and thus eliminate the process to issue, retrieve and store badges at the entrance stations to the plant. Badges do not carry any information other than a unique identification number.

All other access processes, including search function capability, would remain the same. This system would not be used for persons requiring escorted access, i.e., visitors.

Based on a Sandia National Laboratories report entitled, ''A Performance Evaluation of Biometric Identification Devices'' (SAND91–0276 UC–906 Unlimited Release, Printed June 1991), and on the licensee's experience with the current photo-identification system, the licensee stated that the false-accept rate for the hand geometry system is at least equal to the current system. The licensee will implement a process for testing the proposed system to ensure continued overall level of performance equivalent to that specified in the regulation. The Physical Security Plan for VCSNS, Unit 1, will be revised to include implementation and testing of the hand geometry access control system and to allow licensee employees and contractors to take their badges offsite.

The licensee will control all points of personnel access into a protected area under the observation of security personnel through the use of a badge and verification of hand geometry. A numbered picture badge identification system will continue to be used for all individuals who are authorized unescorted access to protected areas. Badges will continue to be displayed by all individuals while inside the protected area.

Since both the badges and hand geometry would be necessary for access into the protected areas, the proposed system would provide for a positive verification process. The potential loss of a badge by an individual, as a result of taking the badge offsite, would not enable an unauthorized entry into protected areas.

For the foregoing reasons, pursuant to 10 CFR 73.55(a), the NRC staff has determined that the proposed alternative measures for protection against radiological sabotage meet ''the same high assurance objective'' and ''the general performance requirements'' of the regulation and that ''the overall level of system performance provides protection against radiological sabotage equivalent'' to that which would be provided by the regulation.

IV

Accordingly, the Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 73.5, an exemption is authorized by law, will not endanger life or property or common defense and security, and is otherwise in the public interest. Therefore, the Commission hereby grants an exemption from those requirements of 10 CFR 73.55(d)(5) relating to the returning of picture badges upon exit from the protected area such that individuals not employed by the licensee, i.e., contractors who are authorized unescorted access into the protected area, may take their picture badges offsite.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has determined that the granting of this exemption will not result in any significant adverse environmental impact (60 FR 43819).

This exemption is effective upon issuance.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland, this 21st day of December 1995.

For the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Steven A. Varga,

Director, Division of Reactor Projects—I/II, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

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[Docket Nos. 50–295 and 50–304]

Commonwealth Edison Company; Notice of Consideration of Issuance of Amendments to Facility Operating Licenses and Opportunity for a Hearing

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (the Commission) is considering issuance of amendments to Facility Operating License Nos. DPR–39 and DPR–48, issued to Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd, the licensee), for operation of the Zion Nuclear Power Station, Units 1 and 2, located in Lake County, Illinois.

The proposed amendments, requested by the licensee in its letter of November 3, 1995, as supplemented on November 22, 1995, would represent a full conversion from the current Technical Specifications (TS) to a set of TS based on NUREG–1431, ''Standard Technical Specifications, Westinghouse Plants,'' September 1992. NUREG–1431 has been developed through working groups composed of both NRC staff members and Westinghouse owners and has been endorsed by the staff as part of an industry-wide initiative to standardize and improve TS. As part of this submittal, the licensee has applied the criteria contained in the NRC Final Policy Statement on Technical Specification Improvement for Nuclear Power Reactors (58 FR 39132, dated 7/22/93) to the current Zion Nuclear Power Station TS.

The licensee has categorized the proposed changes into four general groupings. These groupings are characterized as relocated requirements, administrative changes, less restrictive changes involving deletion of requirements, and more restrictive changes.

''R''—Relocation of Requirements

Relocating requirements that do not meet the TS criteria, to documents with an established control program, allows the TS to be reserved only for those conditions or limitations upon reactor operation that are necessary to