

February 16, 2000

Mr. Michael D. Wadley, President
NSP Nuclear Generation
Northern States Power Company
414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

SUBJECT: MONTICELLO NUCLEAR GENERATING PLANT - EXEMPTION FROM
10 CFR 55.59 (TAC NO. MA7981)

Dear Mr. Wadley:

By letter dated January 19, 2000, Northern States Power Company (NSP) requested a one-time exemption from the 2-year schedular requirement of 10 CFR 55.59, to allow the licensed operator requalification examinations for the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant to be rescheduled after the current refueling outage. The requested exemption would extend the completion date for the examinations from March 9, 2000, to May 12, 2000. In the letter, NSP indicated that, by assigning licensed operators to the outage organization, a reduction in overall shutdown risk could be realized.

The Commission has granted the requested exemption, pursuant to 10 CFR 55.11. A copy of the exemption is enclosed and is being forwarded to the Office of the Federal Register for publication.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Carl F. Lyon, Project Manager, Section 1
Project Directorate III
Division of Licensing Project Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Docket No. 50-263

Enclosure: Exemption

cc w/encl: See next page

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Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant

cc:

J. E. Silberg, Esquire
Shaw, Pittman, Potts and Trowbridge
2300 N Street, N. W.
Washington, DC 20037

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Resident Inspector's Office
2807 W. County Road 75
Monticello, MN 55362

Plant Manager
Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant
ATTN: Site Licensing
Northern States Power Company
2807 West County Road 75
Monticello, MN 55362-9637

Robert Nelson, President
Minnesota Environmental Control
Citizens Association (MECCA)
1051 South McKnight Road
St. Paul, MN 55119

Commissioner
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55119

Regional Administrator, Region III
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
801 Warrenville Road
Lisle, IL 60532-4351

Commissioner of Health
Minnesota Department of Health
717 Delaware Street, S. E.
Minneapolis, MN 55440

Douglas M. Gruber, Auditor/Treasurer
Wright County Government Center
10 NW Second Street
Buffalo, MN 55313

Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Commerce
121 Seventh Place East
Suite 200
St. Paul, MN 55101-2145

Adonis A. Neblett
Assistant Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
445 Minnesota Street
Suite 900
St. Paul, MN 55101-2127

Site General Manager
Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant
ATTN: Site Licensing
Northern States Power Company
2807 West County Road 75
Monticello, MN 55362-9637

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| In the Matter of |) | Docket No. 50-263 |
| |) | |
| Northern States Power Company |) | License No. DPR-22 |
| |) | |
| (Monticello, Unit No. 1) |) | |

EXEMPTION

I.

Northern States Power Company (NSP or the licensee) is the holder of Facility Operating License No. DPR-22, which authorizes operation of the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant (the facility) at steady state core power levels not in excess of 1775 megawatts thermal. The facility consists of a boiling water reactor, located in Wright County at the licensee's site in Wright and Sherburne Counties, Minnesota. The license provides, among other things, that Monticello is subject to all rules, regulations, and orders of the Commission now or hereafter in effect.

II.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 55.59(a)(1), each licensed operator is required to successfully complete a requalification program developed by the licensee that has been approved by the Commission. This program is to be conducted for a continuous period not to exceed 24 months in duration and, upon its conclusion, must be promptly followed by a successive requalification program. In addition, pursuant to 10 CFR 55.59(a)(2), each licensed operator must also pass a comprehensive requalification written examination and an annual operating test.

III.

By letter dated January 19, 2000, NSP requested an exemption under 10 CFR 55.11 from the requirements of 10 CFR 55.59(a)(2). The schedular exemption requested will extend the current Monticello requalification program from March 9, 2000, to May 12, 2000. The requested exemption would constitute a one-time extension of the requalification program duration.

The regulation at 10 CFR 55.11 states that "The Commission may, upon application by an interested person, or upon its own initiative, grant such exemptions from the requirements of the regulations in this part as it determines are authorized by law and will not endanger life or property and are otherwise in the public interest."

IV.

The Commission has determined that, pursuant to 10 CFR 55.11, granting an exemption to NSP from the requirements in 10 CFR 55.59(a)(1) and (a)(2) is authorized by law and will not endanger life or property and is otherwise in the public interest. To require scheduling of the comprehensive examination of the licensee's operators and staff in order to support the 24-month requalification cycle could have a detrimental effect on the public interest, because it could prolong the current plant refueling outage without a net benefit to safety. Further, this one-time exemption will allow additional operator support during plant shutdown conditions, which will provide a safety enhancement during plant shutdown operations and post-maintenance testing. The affected licensed operators will continue to demonstrate and possess the required levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to safely operate the plant throughout the transitional period via continuation of the current satisfactory licensed operator requalification program. Accordingly, the Commission hereby grants NSP an exemption, on a one-time only basis, from the schedular requirements of 10 CFR 55.59(a)(1) and (a)(2) to allow

the current Monticello requalification program to be extended beyond 24 months, not to exceed 27 months, and to expire on May 12, 2000.

Pursuant to 10 CFR 51.32, the Commission has also determined that the issuance of the exemption will have no significant impact on the environment. An Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact was noticed in the Federal Register on February 16, 2000 (65 FR 7897).

This exemption is effective upon issuance. This exemption expires on May 12, 2000.

Dated at Rockville, Maryland this 16th day of February 2000.

FOR THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

/RA/

Bruce A. Boger, Director
Division of Inspection Program Management
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

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