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NRC Approves Changes to Vermont Yankee Nuclear Plant's Emergency Planning Requirements

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has granted Entergy Nuclear Operations Inc.'s request to alter the emergency preparedness plan for the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station in Vernon, Vt., effective April 15, 2016, to reflect the plant's decommissioning status.

The changes come in the form of exemptions from certain NRC requirements that may not be appropriate for a plant that has permanently ceased operations. Once the licensee implements the exemptions, state and local governments may rely on comprehensive emergency management ("all hazard") planning for off-site emergency response to events at Vermont Yankee, rather than having a dedicated offsite radiological emergency response plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As a result, there will not be a 10-mile emergency planning zone identified in Vermont Yankee's license. The plant will maintain an onsite emergency plan and response capabilities, including the continued notification of state government officials of an emergency declaration.

Entergy provided analyses to show the exemptions are warranted because when compared to an operating power reactor, the risk of an offsite radiological release is significantly lower and the types of possible accidents significantly fewer at a nuclear power reactor that has permanently ceased operations and removed fuel from the reactor vessel. The NRC staff evaluated and confirmed these analyses and, based on the NRC staff's evaluation and recommendation, the Commission [approved the exemptions](#) March 2. The exemption package, including a safety evaluation, was issued Dec. 10. Under the exemptions, Entergy may not implement the changes to its emergency preparedness plans until April 15, 2016, based on the company's evaluation of applicable accidents.

Vermont Yankee, a single boiling-water reactor, began operations in 1972. It ceased operations Dec. 29, 2014. All spent fuel has been permanently moved from the reactor vessels into the spent fuel pools for storage. The exemptions from certain emergency preparedness requirements are part of several changes to the plant's licensing basis and technical specifications the licensee requested to reflect Vermont Yankee's decommissioning status.