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NRC Renews License for Dry Spent Fuel Storage Facility at Prairie Island

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Dec. 9 approved a 40-year license renewal for Northern States Power Co.-Minnesota's dry-cask independent spent fuel storage installation at the Prairie Island nuclear power plant in Goodhue County, Minn.

The license now has an expiration date of Oct. 31, 2053. The initial 20-year license would have expired Oct. 31, 2013, but Northern States Power submitted a request to renew it in 2011. This meant the facility was considered to be in "timely renewal," where the license would not expire as long as the NRC staff was reviewing the request. This allowed the Prairie Island independent spent fuel storage installation to continue to operate under its existing license until the NRC completed its safety and security review, and reached a decision on the license renewal application. The NRC published the final [Environmental Assessment](#) in July and documented the safety review in a final [Safety Evaluation Report](#), issued Dec. 9.

The renewed license, the sixth the NRC has issued for a dry cask storage facility, contains conditions requiring periodic inspections of the casks and their components to ensure potential aging effects are identified and managed. These conditions require Northern States Power to evaluate any issues and take corrective action to address anything that could prevent a cask component from performing its safety function.

"Our decision to relicense Prairie Island's dry cask storage systems is based on our finding that they meet the NRC's strict standards and will be able to store spent fuel safely over the extended period of the renewed license," said Anthony Hsia, acting Director of the NRC's Division of Spent Fuel Management. "Inspections by the licensee and the NRC going forward will ensure any effects from aging will be managed so they do not affect the casks' ability to protect workers, the public and the environment."

There are now operating independent spent fuel storage facilities at 69 sites in the United States. Spent fuel is moved into NRC-approved dry casks after an appropriate time of cooling in a spent fuel pool. Plants implement dry storage when their spent fuel pools are at or near capacity.