

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Petition of	)	DOCKET NO. TR-050630
	)	
TRANSALTA CENTRALIA	)	ORDER NO. 01
GENERATION, LLC	)	
	)	
Petitioner,	)	
	)	ORDER GRANTING EXEMPTION
Requesting Exemption From WAC	)	FROM CLEARANCE RULES IN WAC
480-60-040 and 480-60-050	)	480-60 AT PRIMARY ASH LOADOUT
.....	)	

**BACKGROUND**

- 1     On April 20, 2005, TransAlta Centralia Generation, LLC (TransAlta) filed a petition with the Commission, requesting exemption from railroad clearance rules in WAC 480-60. WAC 480-60-040 generally requires an overhead clearance of at least 22'-6"; and WAC 480-60-050 generally requires a lateral clearance of at least 8'-6", measured from the centerline of track. Although the rules provide for exceptions, the types of structures associated with TransAlta's request are subject to the general rules.
- 2     The BNSF Railway Company (BNSF), as the primary rail operator within the TransAlta facility, has filed a letter supporting TransAlta's request for the exemptions proposed in this docket. BNSF's support is conditioned upon the Commission granting a variance for the proposed clearances.
- 3     The request relates to the construction of a loop track within the TransAlta Centralia plant to improve coal delivery. The track will run through a structure known as the primary ash load-out facility, where an overhead automatic loading mechanism loads ash from the plant onto either trucks or railcars. The load-out facility is essentially an enclosure made up of four steel support posts with concrete bases that hold up the structure from which ash is loaded. The ash loading chute is located roughly in the center of the overhead structure.

- 4 The track clearances achieved by TransAlta's proposed design are less than those required by WAC 480-60 at six locations within the primary loading facility: lateral clearance from the centerline of the track to each of the four support posts; vertical clearance from the track to the bottom of the overhead loading structure; and vertical clearance from the track to the bottom of the overhead loading chute.
- 5 The proposed lateral clearance variances are as follows: the southeastern support post is designed to have a clearance of 8'-2 13/32" or 3 19/32" below the required minimum; the northeastern support post is designed to have a clearance of 8'-2 15/32" or 3 17/32" below the required minimum; the southwestern support post is designed to have a clearance of 8'-2 17/32" or 3 15/32" below the required minimum; and the northwestern support post is designed to have a clearance of 8'-2 7/8" or 3 1/8" below the required minimum.
- 6 The proposed overhead clearance variations are as follows: overhead clearance proposed between the track and the overhead loading structure (i.e. the lower edge of the enclosure where a train would enter and exit the loading facility) is a minimum of 17'-8 7/8" or 4'-9 1/8" below the required minimum; and overhead clearance proposed between the track and the bottom edge of the ash loading chute is 17'-6" or 5' below the required minimum.
- 7 Trains traveling through the ash load-out facility will be limited to 5 mph. With the proposed clearances, BNSF's trains will be able to clear the structures; however, the close clearances would present a significant risk to individuals within the loading facility or riding on the exterior of a train.
- 8 Although train crewmembers have no reason to ride on the exterior of trains in the vicinity of the ash load-out facility, all parties agreed that any clearance exemption at the proposed locations should be conditioned upon a prohibition against riding on the exterior of any rail equipment in the vicinity of the ash

load-out facility, and clearly marking and signing the structures identified above as having substandard clearances.

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9 (1) The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is an agency of the state of Washington having jurisdiction over railroad clearance requirements. Chapter 81.28.010 RCW and WAC 480-60-020.
- 10 (2) Commission Staff investigated the request and recommended that it be granted, subject to specified conditions.
- 11 (3) This matter was brought before the Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on June 29, 2005.
- 12 (4) After examination of the petition filed by TransAlta on April 20, 2005, and giving consideration to all relevant matters and for good cause shown, the Commission grants the petition.

### ORDER

#### THE COMMISSION ORDERS:

- 13 The petition of TransAlta Centralia Generation, LLC, requesting exemption from WAC 480-60 as specified above, is granted. Approval of the petition is subject to the following conditions:

- (1) The BNSF Railway Company must issue a General Order to all train crews operating on the TransAlta Centralia loop track prohibiting the practice of riding on the side or on top of any on-track equipment when approaching or traveling through the primary ash load-out facility. A copy of the General Order must be provided to Commission Staff upon its issuance.

- (2) Cautionary signs must be installed on each railroad approach to the close clearance locations specified in this Order that indicate that the clearance between the structures and the track is substandard. The signs must be reflectorized, designed, and placed so as to be highly visible and clearly indicative of the points of close clearance.
  
- (3) TransAlta Centralia Generation, LLC must notify Commission Staff upon installation of the signs required by condition 2. Acceptance of the installations is subject to inspection by Commission Staff for compliance with the requirements herein.

The Commissioners, having determined that this filing complies with the requirements of Chapter 81.28.010 RCW and WAC 480-60-020, directed the Secretary to enter this Order.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective this 29<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2005.

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

CAROLE J. WASHBURN, Secretary