



NRC NEWS

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No. S-07-027

NRC Chairman Dale E. Klein
Remarks as prepared for delivery
Browns Ferry Unit 1 Restart
June 21, 2007

I know that this is a day of celebration for TVA, and I expect you are all excited about hearing from President Bush, who will speak in a few moments and will probably have some nice things to say about what you have achieved here and about the role of nuclear power in meeting the nation's energy challenges.

I would also like to add my congratulations. But since I am the head of the nation's independent nuclear regulatory body, let me choose my words precisely: Congratulations on successfully meeting the NRC's rigorous safety and inspection standards, and earning the authorization to restart Unit 1.

The NRC is a demanding regulator, and we hold our licensees to a high level of accountability for safety and security. The fact that the owners and operators of Browns Ferry met those standards is a testament to their diligence, attention to detail, and hard work.

The safe operation of commercial nuclear plants is a joint responsibility that requires the active cooperation of the utilities and the NRC. The successful restart of Browns Ferry Unit 1 is an excellent demonstration of what can be accomplished when everyone does their jobs well. Together, TVA and the NRC ensured that the restart we are commemorating today was accomplished safely.

In the five years since the owners announced their plans to restart Browns Ferry Unit 1, the NRC has sent more than 120 inspectors and staff to this site to oversee every aspect of the refurbishing. That is a serious allocation of resources, but it allows us to say with confidence that this plant meets our rigorous safety standards, and we consider it time and money well spent.

Obviously, TVA spent a lot of time to make this possible. But I hope William Sansom and Skila Harris will indulge me if I also take a moment to congratulate the skill, dedication, and hard work of the NRC staff. Altogether our agency's personnel devoted more than 60,000 hours to reviewing licensing requests and conducting inspections on Unit 1. This time was divided roughly in half between the regional office in Atlanta doing on-site inspections and our headquarters staff in Washington, D.C., reviewing licensing activities.

Now, 60,000 hours is a big number to comprehend. Since we are in Alabama, let me put it this

way: An 11-man football squad running drills for 6 hours a day, every day of the week, rain or shine, would take 130 weeks – or two and half years straight – to reach a combined total of 60,000 hours of practice time. That would be a lot even in Texas, where we also take football seriously.

So a great deal of effort went into approving this restart. But in a way, that is just the beginning – not the end – of the NRC’s safety oversight responsibilities. Because from the first day of operations, until the last day of operations, this site will be under the constant watch of the NRC resident inspector’s office.

Resident inspectors are the front lines of the NRC’s safety oversight – our boots on the ground, so to speak. These are highly trained staff who live in the community, work on-site at the reactors, and are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for operational oversight and emergency response. Their entire job is to make sure that the status of the nuclear plant is where it should be to operate safely. So on behalf on the Commission, I want to thank them for their hard work.

Now, I know there are other speakers lined up, including the man who nominated me to my current job, so let me conclude today’s lesson in NRC safety oversight by thanking you for your attention – and saying, once again, congratulations.

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