

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Region II
101 Marietta Street, Suite 2900
Atlanta, GA 30323

No.: II-96-106

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Ken Clark 404-331-5503 (Monday, December 30, 1996)

Roger Hannah 404-331-7878

**WATTS BAR NUCLEAR PLANT RATED "SUPERIOR" IN TWO AREAS,
"GOOD" IN TWO OTHER AREAS OF NRC ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The Watts Bar nuclear power plant received performance ratings of "superior" in two areas and "good" in two areas of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

The SALP report was sent December 19 to the Tennessee Valley Authority, which operates the facility near Spring City, Tennessee. It evaluates the plant's performance from November 12, 1995 through November 9 of this year.

NRC and TVA officials will discuss the report during a meeting set for 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 7, at the Watts Bar site. The meeting will be open for public observation. NRC officials will be available after the meeting to speak with reporters, state and local officials, and members of the public.

NRC systematic assessment reports rate licensees in four functional areas - plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support - and assign ratings of Category 1, 2 or 3 depending on whether their performance in those areas was superior, good or adequate.

The report on Watts Bar gives the plant a Category 1 rating in maintenance and engineering indicating "superior" performance, and a Category 2 rating in operations and plant support, indicating "good" performance.

This SALP report is the first for the Watts Bar plant since it received a full-power operating license from the NRC in February of this year. In the previous SALP report issued in August 1994, the NRC staff gave the plant five Category 2 ratings, but the functional areas were different since the plant had not yet received an operating license.

In his cover letter to the report, NRC Regional Administrator Stewart Ebnetter said "operations performance was characterized by good management involvement" and also said the

plant made an effective transition from construction to operation. The letter did, however, point to weaknesses in configuration controls, attention to detail and procedure inadequacies.

In the maintenance area, Ebnetter wrote that maintenance was "planned and implemented with strong management involvement and as been characterized by strong safety system performance and availability, with the exception of the area of calibration and setpoint control."

In the letter, Ebnetter highlighted superior engineering performance in "aggressively pursuing resolution to design problems that occurred during the power ascension test program."

In the plant support area, Ebnetter noted strong performance in radiological controls and emergency preparedness, but said improvements are needed in several areas related to security.

###

EDITORS: A copy of the full SALP report is available from this office. SALP reports are also available on the NRC's Internet web site (<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>) and by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail as they are issued, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.