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NRC FINDS PERFORMANCE 'ACCEPTABLE'
IN LATEST REVIEW AT WATTS BAR

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has found that safety performance remains acceptable in the NRC's latest plant performance review at the Watts Bar nuclear power plant, operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority near Spring City, Tennessee.

In a letter to TVA, NRC official Paul E. Fredrickson said "overall performance at Watts Bar was acceptable" during the evaluation period from December 1997 through January 1999 and that the unit operated at power during that time. He said "operations activities continued to improve" and that "control room conduct and response to off-normal conditions continued to be excellent."

Fredrickson said "security performance initially declined but improved towards the end of the period." He said inadequate maintenance and testing had resulted in an ineffective security detection and assessment system but that prompt corrective action was effective in improving performance.

The text of the plant performance review letter is available from the NRC Region II Office of Public Affairs and on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/ppr>.

NRC reviews safety performance twice a year at every licensed nuclear power plant in the nation. These reviews give the agency staff an integrated assessment of plant performance and provide a basis for planning inspection activities.

Plant performance reviews are being used as an interim measure to monitor nuclear power plant safety. The agency began using it for this purpose after suspending the Systematic Assessment of License Performance (SALP) process until a new assessment program is developed. Previously, SALP reports were issued every 12 to 24 months.

The new reactor oversight and assessment program being developed will provide quarterly performance reports, based on a number of performance indicators and on inspection findings. This program will be tested at eight sites, including TVA's Sequoyah nuclear power plant near Chattanooga, beginning in June and will be extended to all plants next January. A full description of the new program is available on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/primer.htm>.

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