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**NRC STAFF ISSUES ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE
AT WATTS BAR NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

Plant Issued Three Superior and One Good Performance Ratings

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has released a Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) report for the Tennessee Valley Authority's Watts Bar nuclear power plant near Spring City, Tennessee, which designates superior performance in the functional areas of Maintenance, Engineering and Plant Support and good performance in Plant Operations.

Operations at Watts Bar were evaluated by the NRC technical staff for a period from November 10, 1996, through December 6, 1997. During the previous 12-month assessment period, from November 12, 1995 through November 9, 1996, the plant received identical ratings in those areas.

Luis A. Reyes, administrator of the NRC's Atlanta regional office, said in a January 14 letter to TVA's chief nuclear officer, O. J. Zeringue, that the current evaluation is the second 12-month period of review since issuance of the plant's operating license and that " the evaluation frequency will be extended commensurate with the facility's performance." NRC policy is to evaluate plant performance approximately every 18 months at plants which are performing well.

Reyes said the report is "indicative of management establishing high standards of performance and carefully monitoring the outcomes."

NRC SALP reports rate licensee performance during specific time periods in the functional areas of Plant Operations, Maintenance, Engineering and Plant Support. Performance is measured as being in Category 1 (superior), Category 2 (good) or Category 3 (acceptable).

NRC officials will discuss details of the report with TVA managers in a public meeting to be held at the Watts Bar site on January 29 at 11:00 a.m. They will be available at the meeting's conclusion to answer questions from interested observers.

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EDITORS: A copy of the SALP report is available from this office, on the NRC's Internet web site at <http://www.nrc.gov> 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 message: `subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname`.