



NRC NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

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NRC AUTHORIZES REINSTATEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION PERMITS FOR BELLEFONTE NUCLEAR REACTORS 1 AND 2

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has authorized the reinstatement of the construction permits for Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA's) unfinished Unit 1 and 2 reactors at the Bellefonte site near Scottsboro, Ala.

In 2006, having decided not to complete construction of the reactors, TVA requested that NRC withdraw the construction permits for the two Bellefonte units. However, in August 2008 TVA, citing changing power-generating economics, stated that completing the Bellefonte reactors may now be viable and requested that the NRC reinstate the permits. If the Bellefonte construction permits had remained in place, they would not have expired until 2011 and 2014, respectively.

TVA also requested that the permits be reinstated with the reactors classified in the "deferred" status – a category indicating a plant's structures, equipment and records have been well maintained in a mothballed condition. The Commission denied that portion of the request. "The Commission Policy Statement on Deferred Plants is clear and demanding with respect to the condition of the facilities and the quality of plant records. The Bellefonte reactors simply do not meet that threshold right now," said NRC Chairman Dale Klein.

The Commission chose instead to reinstate the permits with the reactors classified in the "terminated" status – a designation which recognizes that the structures, equipment and records have not been continuously maintained. This will require TVA to re-establish physical conditions and records quality of units 1 and 2 before the units could transition to a "deferred" status. This two-step approach provides assurance to the public that the NRC will thoroughly scrutinize the plant and that any issues identified will be addressed before TVA can move forward.

The reinstatement of a withdrawn construction permit is unique. The Commission, after considering the technical, regulatory, and legal aspects of TVA's request, concluded that there is sufficient reason to reinstate the construction permits and that a more conservative sequential

approach will ensure the safety of doing so. “We will start them out one step at a time so we can ensure the safety of these unfinished plants,” Klein said. “They will not be placed in a ‘deferred’ status until we are completely satisfied.”

The agency granted construction permits for Bellefonte’s two pressurized water reactors in 1974. By 1988, when TVA deferred completion of the plant, Unit 1 was approximately 88 percent complete, and Unit 2 was approximately 58 percent complete. There is no nuclear fuel on the site. The Bellefonte site is located on approximately 1,600 acres adjacent to the Tennessee River in northern Alabama.

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