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NRC Issues Confirmatory Action Letter to Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has outlined a list of actions committed to by the Tennessee Valley Authority intended to ensure the continued improvement of the utility's Browns Ferry nuclear plant.

After those actions are completed by TVA and inspected by the NRC, the agency will reevaluate its increased oversight stemming from a high safety significance (red) inspection finding finalized in 2011.

The Browns Ferry plant is near Athens, Ala., about 32 miles west of Huntsville.

The NRC sent a [confirmatory action letter](#) to TVA this week that confirms the list of Tier 1 actions which TVA committed to in an [Aug. 9 letter](#) to the NRC. There are 10 Tier 1 actions scheduled to be completed by Nov. 30. Those actions include improvements in safety culture, the corrective action program, the safety system reliability plan, work management process and a procedure upgrade project. Once this group is completed, the NRC will determine the appropriate level of oversight.

The second group of longer-term actions, detailed by TVA in its Aug. 9 letter and focused on sustained excellent performance and long-term success criteria, are scheduled to be completed by Dec. 15, 2014, though some are scheduled for completion as early as May 2014.

“The confirmatory action letter gives TVA a clear set of commitments and expectations, and ensures they understand what they must do to continue to safely operate the plant,” said Victor McCree, NRC Region II Administrator. “Browns Ferry has improved its safety performance, but it must continue to improve and sustain a high performance level.”

The red finding was issued due to the failure of a low-pressure coolant injection valve at Browns Ferry in the fall of 2010. That valve is part of a system relied upon for core cooling during certain accident scenarios. Even though the valve was promptly repaired after its condition was discovered, under the NRC's oversight process a red finding has high safety significance and results in intensive NRC inspection and oversight.

A 23-person NRC team completed an intensive supplemental inspection at the plant in May. The supplemental inspection, which was divided into three parts, began in 2011 following the red finding.

(The confirmatory action letter will be available via the NRC website (search for ML13232A105). If you need an immediate copy, contact the NRC Region II Public Affairs Office.)