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NRC Cites Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant for Emergency Plan Staffing Issues; Confirms Actions to Address Violations

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a white inspection finding to the Tennessee Valley Authority for violations at the Browns Ferry nuclear power plant related to emergency plan staffing in the control room. The NRC has also issued an order confirming actions TVA is taking to address associated violations.

TVA's Browns Ferry plant is located near Athens, Ala., about 32 miles west of Huntsville.

The NRC found that TVA failed to maintain staffing levels in accordance with the plant's radiological emergency plan and that the issue had low to moderate safety significance. TVA officials agreed with that determination. Two violations related to the staffing inspection finding involved the failure to provide complete and accurate information on the issue and the failure to request a license amendment for the staffing changes. TVA requested the NRC's Alternative Dispute Resolution process for those violations.

The ADR process uses a neutral mediator with no decision-making authority to assist the NRC and licensees in reaching an agreement when there are differences regarding an enforcement action. An ADR session between the NRC and TVA was held on April 3 and the NRC order is the result of an agreement reached during that session.

"While no actual events occurred, it is important that appropriate staffing is maintained and the NRC approves any changes to staffing levels in a plant's license," said NRC Region II Administrator Victor McCree. "We believe the steps TVA has agreed to take appropriately address the issues and minimize the likelihood that similar issues will arise in the future."

The order documents a number of corrective actions taken or planned by TVA. Those actions at the Browns Ferry site and TVA's other two nuclear plants include new procedures for submitting license information to the NRC and for verifying changes and compliance, reviews of the processes involved and a sharing of the information with other nuclear plant operators.