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NRC Issues Operating License for Watts Bar Unit 2, Oversight Continues

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) a 40-year operating license for Watts Bar Unit 2. This is the first U.S. reactor the NRC has authorized to operate since 1996, when the agency issued the license for Watts Bar Unit 1.

The Watts Bar plant, located in Spring City, Tenn., about 60 miles southwest of Knoxville, now has two pressurized-water reactors. The Unit 2 license allows operation through Oct. 22, 2055.

“After devoting more than 200,000 hours over eight years conducting extensive safety reviews and inspections, we’re satisfied Unit 2 is safe to operate and we’ve issued TVA the operating license,” said Bill Dean, director of the NRC’s Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. “We already monitor Unit 1’s performance through our Reactor Oversight Process, which is used at all reactor sites throughout the country, and we’re adding Unit 2 to that system. Staff from our Region II office in Atlanta will ensure TVA meets its requirements as it loads fuel into Unit 2 and runs tests before the unit starts generating electricity.”

TVA had maintained Unit 2 in an incomplete state since 1985 and had extended the unit’s construction permit since then. In 2007, the utility began efforts to complete Unit 2 and updated its operating license application in March 2009. The NRC staff completed its Unit 2 [environmental review](#) in May 2013 and the staff has been supplementing the Unit 2 [safety evaluation report](#) on an ongoing basis. The NRC’s Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards also [reviewed the staff’s work](#) and supported the licensing decision.

Watts Bar is the first site to comply with the agency’s Fukushima-related Orders on [Mitigation Strategies](#) and [Spent Fuel Pool Instrumentation](#). The agency has two Resident Inspectors at Watts Bar for day-to-day oversight of site activities, and an additional Resident Inspector for continued oversight of start-up activities at Unit 2.

The Watts Bar 2 decision means there are now 100 U.S. commercial reactors licensed to operate. Information on these plants and the NRC’s oversight of them is available on the [NRC website](#).