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CONTACT: Roger Hannah 404-997-4417
Joey Ledford 404-997-4416

NRC Proposes \$140,000 Fine for Violation at Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a \$140,000 civil penalty against the Tennessee Valley Authority for violations related to fire watches at the Browns Ferry nuclear power plant near Athens, Ala., about 32 miles west of Huntsville.

An NRC investigation found that on numerous occasions in May 2015, five of TVA's contract fire watch workers deliberately failed to conduct roving fire watch patrols as required by NRC regulations. The fire watch patrols were required as a compensatory measure for fire protection equipment that was out of service at the time.

The actions did not result in any actual safety consequences as no fires occurred in those areas during the time the patrols were supposed to take place.

"Missed fire watches greatly concern us," said NRC Region II Administrator Cathy Haney. "Even though plants have other fire protection features, fire watches are an integral part of the plant's overall fire protection strategy, especially when other equipment is temporarily unavailable."

Based on the severity of the violation and the fact that multiple contract personnel engaged in deliberate misconduct in not performing the fire watches, the NRC staff found that a \$140,000 civil penalty was warranted. During a predecisional enforcement conference in September, TVA outlined a number of corrective actions that have been taken, including the dismissal of the offenders, upgraded training of personnel, improved procedures and enhanced fire watch record keeping.

TVA has 30 days to pay the civil penalty or appeal its imposition.