

No: II-17-033

May 16, 2017

Contact: Roger Hannah, 404-997-4417
Joey Ledford, 404-997-4416

NRC Schedules Meeting to Discuss 2016 Performance of Watts Bar Nuclear Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a meeting for May 25 in Athens, Tenn., with the Tennessee Valley Authority to discuss the 2016 safety performance of the Watts Bar nuclear power plant.

The Watts Bar plant is located near Spring City, about 60 miles southwest of Knoxville.

The meeting is scheduled to run from 6-8 p.m. in the Comfort Inn, 2811 Decatur Pike in Athens. NRC inspectors and managers responsible for NRC oversight of the plant will present the results of the agency's 2016 assessment, and will be available to answer questions or provide additional information after the business portion of the meeting concludes.

Overall, the Watts Bar plant operated safely during 2016 and met NRC requirements. As of the end of 2016, the plant had no inspection findings or performance indicators outside the normal band. As a result, it is currently under the NRC's baseline level of oversight, which entails thousands of hours of inspection each year. However, there are two important differences between the Watts Bar plant and other nuclear plants under a similar level of NRC oversight.

In November 2016, the NRC staff notified TVA that Watts Bar Unit 2 had completely transitioned from construction oversight to the agency's reactor oversight process for operating units. In addition, the NRC continues to follow up on a chilling effect letter that was issued to the Watts Bar plant in early 2016 after the NRC determined that some operations employees at the plant may not have felt free to raise safety concerns. The NRC will use normal inspection samples and focused inspections to assess TVA's effectiveness in addressing the concerns that resulted in the chilling effect letter.

The NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to measure plant performance. Any inspection findings or performance indicators that have more than very low safety significance trigger increased NRC oversight.

Routine inspections are performed by resident inspectors assigned to the plant. Reviews are also carried out at the sites by specialist inspectors assigned to the agency's Region II office in Atlanta.

The [annual assessment letter](#) for Watts Bar, as well as the notice for the meeting, are available on the [NRC website](#). Current performance information for [Unit 1](#) and [Unit 2](#) and is also available.