



NRC NEWS

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NRC SCHEDULES OPEN HOUSE TO DISCUSS PERFORMANCE OF WATTS BAR UNIT 1 FOLLOWED BY MEETING TO DISCUSS UNIT 2 CONSTRUCTION

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials have scheduled an open house Tuesday, April 20 to provide information on the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for Unit 1 at the Watts Bar nuclear power plant during 2009. After that open house, the NRC will provide a brief presentation on the agency's assessment of construction activities at Watts Bar Unit 2.

The open house is scheduled to run from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Andrew Johnson Room at the Magnuson Hotel, 1421 Murray's Chapel Rd. in Sweetwater, Tenn. and it will allow people to learn about Unit 1's performance last year as well as NRC oversight and inspection. The presentation on Unit 2 will begin at 4 p.m. in the same room and will be followed by a question and answer session.

The Watts Bar plant, which has one operating pressurized-water reactor and one unit currently completing construction, is located near Spring City, Tenn., about 60 miles southwest of Knoxville. It is owned and operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Overall, the NRC staff concluded that Watts Bar Unit 1 operated safely in 2009, and there were no inspection findings or performance indicators that would cause the NRC to increase its level of oversight and inspection. Based on the plant's performance, the NRC staff plans to continue the detailed routine or baseline inspections all nuclear power plants receive.

"Every year, the NRC evaluates the safety performance of nuclear plants in a systematic and detailed way. These reviews allow us to respond to ongoing issues, if needed, and to plan our future inspections," NRC Region II Administrator Luis Reyes said. "This open house gives local officials and citizens an opportunity to learn more about our oversight and is consistent with our commitment to openness and transparency."

The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess operating plant performance. The colors start with "green," which has very low safety significance, to "white," "yellow" or "red," based on the significance of the issues. Inspection findings and performance indicators are updated on the NRC's web site (www.nrc.gov) each quarter.

The annual assessment letter for Watts Bar Unit 1 is available on the NRC web site at www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/wb_2009q4.pdf.

Routine inspections are carried out by the NRC resident inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region II office in Atlanta. Among the areas at Watts Bar Unit 1 to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are dissimilar metal welds and operator licensing exams.

Current performance information for Watts Bar Unit 1 is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/WB1/wb1_chart.html.

The NRC assessment of Unit 2 found that TVA conducted construction activities in compliance with NRC regulations and the conditions of the plant's construction permit. Based on that assessment, the NRC will not expand its activities beyond the detailed inspections currently being conducted.

Information on Watts Bar Unit 2 can be found at: www.nrc.gov/reactors/plant-specific-items/watts-bar.html.

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