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NRC Issues Chilling Effect Letter to TVA to Address Watts Bar Nuclear Plant Work Environment Issues

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a [chilling effect letter](#) to the Tennessee Valley Authority after determining that a “chilled work environment” exists within the operations staff at the Watts Bar nuclear power plant near Spring City, Tenn., about 60 miles southwest of Knoxville.

An NRC review into the Watts Bar work environment found that some operations employees may not have felt free to raise safety concerns, and some licensed operators may have been unduly influenced and directed by sources external to the control room.

The NRC held a meeting with TVA officials in Atlanta on March 22 to discuss the agency’s concerns and TVA’s corrective actions.

“While we believe TVA management understands these issues, the chilling effect letter documents the NRC concerns and our expectations that TVA fully address them and ensure that all plant employees feel free to raise any safety problems,” said NRC Region II Administrator Cathy Haney.

TVA officials must respond to the letter within 30 days with a plan describing how the work environment concerns will be addressed. About two weeks after the TVA plan is received, the NRC will schedule a public meeting with TVA to discuss its plan as well as NRC monitoring and inspection of corrective actions.