Update: 7 pm CST

TVA FACT SHEET UPDATE
WIDOWS CREEK GYPSUM POND
January 10, 2009

TVA is working to repair the gypsum settling pond area at its Widows Creek coal-fired plant after gypsum slurry overflowed into Widows Creek Friday. The overflow was stopped yesterday.

Our priorities are the safety of citizens and plant personnel and recovery of the spilled material. We are also making repairs to the gypsum pond settling system.

TVA is working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to continue to sample the water. The material contains water and a mixture of predominantly gypsum and some fly ash.

TVA also notified local water companies yesterday following the release. EPA and TVA are working from a formal testing plan, reviewed by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, that includes taking water samples on the Tennessee River and Widows Creek. The closest municipal water system is in Stevenson, but the Stevenson system does not withdraw water directly from the Tennessee River.

TVA is still investigating when the leak started and is determining how much material was released. The overflow was discovered at about 6 a.m. CST Friday by plant workers who were conducting a routine inspection of the ponds.

The purpose of the gypsum settling pond area is to remove water from the gypsum slurry. Gypsum settles and remains in the ponds, while the water is discharged into the Tennessee River at a monitored location, approved by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. TVA regularly tests these permitted releases to ensure compliance with environmental guidelines.

TVA has determined that a cap dislodged from an unused 30-inch standpipe in the gypsum pond which allowed water and gypsum to bypass the existing system and drain into the adjacent settling pond, filling it to capacity and causing it to overflow. TVA will fill the unused pipe with concrete.

As part of the recovery, Widows Creek is performing maintenance activities to slope the internal wall of the gypsum pond by bringing in about 3,500 cubic yards of sand.

Gypsum ponds hold limestone spray from TVA's scrubbers that clean sulfur dioxide (SO_2) from coal-plant emissions. Gypsum contains calcium sulfate, which is commonly used in drywall, a commercially sold construction material.

Information on Widows Creek Coal-Fired Plant

TVA's Widows Creek Fossil Plant is located on the west bank of the Tennessee River in Jackson County, Alabama. It is named for the nearby creek. The plant has eight generating units with a combined net generating capacity of 1,750 megawatts.

Groundbreaking occurred on March 28, 1950. The first of the eight turbo-generators went into operation on July 1, 1952 and the last one went into commercial operation on February 7, 1965. Units 7 and 8, the largest at the plant, are outfitted with scrubbers.

FACT SHEET
January 9, 2009

TVA is investigating an event involving a gypsum-pond at Widows Creek Fossil Plant in Stevenson, Alabama. The event was discovered before 6 a.m. on Friday, January 9.

Water and gypsum from the gypsum pond drained into an adjacent settling pond after a cap dislodged from a 30-inch standpipe, which had at one time been used to drain water from the gypsum pond into the settling pond. When the cap dislodged, water and gypsum flowed into the settling pond, which filled to capacity and then overflowed.

The overflow stopped when the level in the gypsum pond dropped to the level of the standpipe.

Some material overflowed into Widows Creek, although most of the gypsum remained in the settling pond. TVA notified appropriate federal and state authorities, as well as Stevenson, Scottsboro, and Huntsville utilities, to inform them of the incident. The closest municipal water system is in Stevenson, but the Stevenson system does not withdraw water directly from the Tennessee River.

Booms are being installed in Widows Creek and the Tennessee River adjacent to the plant to contain the gypsum.

TVA is performing permanent repairs to the standpipe.

Gypsum ponds hold limestone spray from TVA’s scrubbers that clean sulfur dioxide (SO2) from coal-plant emissions. Gypsum contains calcium sulfate, which is commonly used in drywall, a commercially sold construction material.

Media contact: John Moulton 865-632-6000