

TVA Upgrades Warning Systems at 12 Dams

The Tennessee Valley Authority has installed a new warning system at its 60-MW Watauga Dam and modified systems at 11 other dams, to improve public safety during water releases from the dams.

The system at Watauga Dam, which began operating in September 2011, includes signs, warning horns and strobe lights to alert the public to water discharges that can cause a rapid rise in water levels below the dam. The warning horns will not be used at night, to avoid disturbing nearby residents, except in the event of an emergency.

Modifications to the warning systems at the 11 other dams, were completed in October 2011, involved activating only strobe light warning systems at night before water level changes. New signs will inform the public that warning sirens or horns will not be used at night. The dams affected are 76-MW Appalachia, 10-MW Blue Ridge, 136-MW Cherokee, 136-MW Douglas, 36-MW Fort Patrick Henry, 32-MW Great Falls, 100-MW Norris, 24-MW Ocoee No. 1, 40-MW South Holston, 40-MW Tims Ford and 11-MW Wilbur.

TVA operates 29 dams with hydroelectric facilities. The warning systems at TVA's other eight tributary dams and its nine dams on the Tennessee River will not change, says John McCormick, senior vice president of river operations with TVA. In related news, Tennessee Valley Authority's 24-MW Ocoee Dam No. 1 project has reached its centennial milestone.

Ocoee Dam No. 1, on the Ocoee River, is one of the first hydro projects built in the Tennessee Valley and was completed in 1911 by the East Tennessee Power Company. TVA acquired Ocoee Dam No. 1 and Ocoee Dam No. 2 in 1939. "This dam changed the standard of living, the economy and the recreational opportunities in this area as it shaped the Ocoee River," says John McCormick, senior vice president of TVA River Operations.