

Kentucky Dam Operated Efficiently During Storms

Kentucky Dam officials say they had to deal with runoff from a record level of rainfall that swept through the region during April's storms, but the structure was never threatened with malfunction as the dam was able to work efficiently in dealing with the deluge and help minimize the effect of region wide flooding. Jeff Ring, plant manager of the Tennessee Valley Authority facility in Gilbertsville, said during a news conference Wednesday morning that he did order the dam's power generation facility shut down for five days and opened a spill gate temporarily to allow tons of water to flow through during the height of the flooding.

"If we didn't open a spill gate our equipment would have been underwater," Ring said, pointing out that the TVA's main objective of minimizing the negative impact of flooding was always his first consideration. During the period, TVA officials at the dam have been in communication with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in coordinating efforts to alleviate damage from flooding in the region.

Despite some challenges, the facility performed as it was designed to, according to Ring. He said regulating levels during flooding both up and down the river means some sacrifice, but the TVA's and the Corp's priority is the overall safety of those living in areas threatened by flooding. "The safety of our personnel and the public is our priority," he said. "We're looking out for the best interest of everyone involved. We're just trying to do our best for the most."

Ring also stated that lake water levels beat a previous record of 369 feet at the dam by four feet (373 feet), which prompted heightened daily monitoring, but no further emergency measures were needed to deal with the deluge. "It went four feet above the previous record. As far as the headwaters this is the deepest. I've never seen anything like it," Ring said.

Ring said the dam was designed to deal with the situation faced following flooding during the last several weeks and the dam's energy generation capacity is back to normal. Only a few of the flood gates remain completely open. The dam is currently spilling 170,000 cubic feet per second - or 76.5 million gallons of water - with each cubic foot equaling 450 gallons.