

Watts Bar Dam, Lock, and Powerhouse

Warning Systems

Tennessee Valley Authority



Watts Bar

Warning Systems

TVA has installed sirens, strobe lights, and signs at Watts Bar Dam to warn the public of impending changes in water conditions, such as swirling water, strong surface and underwater currents, rapidly rising water levels, and sudden water surges. These changes can occur when TVA starts the turbines that generate electricity at the dam, raises or lowers the water level in the lock, or releases water through the spillway.

In addition, danger buoys upstream of Watts Bar Dam identify hazardous areas ahead. Access to these areas is restricted at all times.

To ensure your safety, please obey these warning devices! The closer you get to a dam, lock, or powerhouse, the more hazardous it can be. Getting too close to these structures isn't worth the gamble.

When will sirens be activated?

Sirens are sounded before water is released from the turbines at the powerhouse or through the spillway. When you hear these sirens, leave the areas upstream and downstream of the powerhouse and dam **immediately**.

When will the strobe lights be activated?

Strobe lights are activated before TVA starts the turbines that generate electricity at the dam or releases water through the spillway. When you see these strobe lights flash, leave the areas upstream and downstream of the powerhouse and dam **immediately**.

During high-flow periods, the spillway at Watts Bar Dam may be used to regulate upstream reservoir levels. When water is being released through the spillway, the water below the dam can be extremely turbulent and hazardous. Under certain flow conditions, boats can be drawn toward the dam where water is plunging through the spillway. Never anchor your boat when fishing below a dam; leave your boat motor running even if drift fishing.

Watts Bar Reservoir levels and release schedules

For more information about Watts Bar, including reservoir levels and water-release schedules, visit www.tva.com or call TVA's automated reservoir information line at 865-632-2264 (865-632-2018 for the hearing impaired). Remember, release schedules can change without notice, so always pay close attention to warning devices.

Contact information

If you have questions about the warning systems at TVA dams, contact:
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