Blown fuse sparks minor emergency at nuke plant

Loss of control room indicators did not endanger public, NRC says

By Anna Simon
CLEMSON BUREAU
asimon@greenvillenews.com

SENECA — A blown fuse caused a loss of indicators in the Unit 3 control room at Oconee Nuclear Station on Wednesday, putting the plant in a low-level emergency status and sparking senior Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials to staff a regional incident response center to monitor the situation.

The situation is considered an "unusual event" and is the lowest of four emergency classifications, said Sandra Magee, a spokeswoman at the Duke Energy facility on the shore of Lake Keowee, 40 miles from Greenville.

The unit is stable and there is no danger to workers or the public, said Joey Ledford, an NRC spokesman.

The NRC will continue to monitor the situation from the response center in Atlanta as it is resolved, and it will determine over the next few days whether any action is needed, Ledford said.

The fuse blew during planned maintenance activities at 12:07 p.m., while Unit 3 was operating at full power, impacting some indicators that provide status on plant equipment, Magee said.

The unit continues to operate at full power, and other monitoring methods are available, Magee said. The incident doesn't affect control of the plant, she said.

Indicators that monitor key plant equipment are still available and working, Magee said.

The Unit 3 control room is separate from a control room that units 1 and 2 share, Magee said.

Control room operators and additional workers are monitoring plant equipment to be sure the unit operates safely and as designed, Magee said.