Feds, Duke Energy to hold public meeting

BY NORMAN CANNADA
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SENECA — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has scheduled a public meeting with Duke Energy officials next week to discuss major projects at the Oconee Nuclear Station, including updates on Duke's fire safety plan.

The meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. Jan. 30 at Duke's World of Energy on S.C. Highway 130. The public is invited.

Discussions will include plant improvements to deal with flooding and tornadoes, as well as Duke's transition to different fire protection standards.

Last week, the NRC denied a request for a two-year extension of the implementation of the new fire protection plan.

The Oconee site and the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant near Raleigh, N.C., were involved in a pilot project to meet new fire regulations. Duke had agreed to complete its changes by Dec. 31, 2012. In July, Duke asked for a two-year extension of the deadline, which was denied in a letter from the NRC last week.

Joey Ledford, an NRC spokesman, said next week's meeting is not connected to the commission's decision to deny the extension.

"I think we would be having the conversation even if the letter had not been sent last week," Ledford said. He added that issues other than the fire protection plan will also be discussed at the meeting.

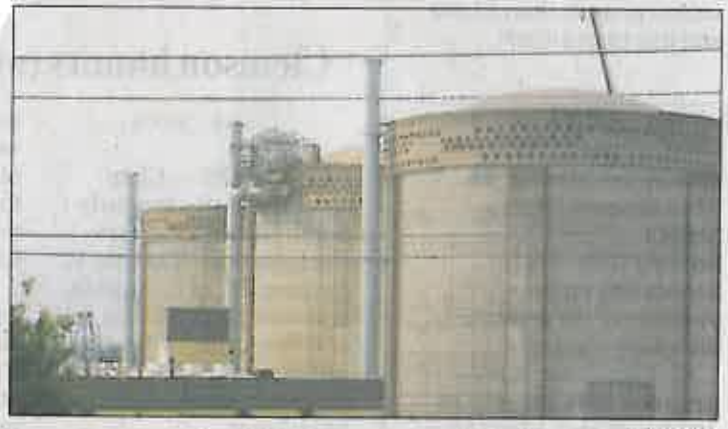
Duke spokeswoman Sandra Magee said NRC officials "periodically" visit the Oconee nuclear site to get updates on plant modifications and plans for the meeting were set before last week's NRC decision.

The Oconee plant has completed most of the requirements for the new fire protection plan. Magee said the biggest change left is the installation of a new protected service water system that will provide protection for all three reactors. Magee estimated the service water system would be completed within 24 months.

Until then, Duke officials have put measures in place to ensure safety, Magee said.

ncannada@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6684

about major projects



FILE PHOTO

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