# Feds sending additional inspector to Oconee

BY NORMAN CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is sending an additional inspector to the Oconee Nuclear Station to assist in finding the cause of a leak that led to the shutdown of the reactor at Unit No. 1 this week.

The reactor remained shut down Thursday, according to Valerie Patterson, a Duke Energy spokeswoman. She said the root cause of the leak in the Unit 1 containment building had not been found Thursday afternoon.

NRC Spokesman Joey Ledford said the inspector is a mechanical engineering specialist and will arrive at the Oconee plant today or Monday. He said the inspector will be assisting the NRC's resident inspectors in finding the root cause of the leak and help with analysis of the situation. The NRC has three resident inspectors at Oconee, one for each of the three reactors.

"It's actually more typical fo

us to send in a whole special inspection team, but it was just enough of a challenge that they needed some help," Ledford said. "It's not to the level of a special inspection where we

SEE OCONEE, PAGE A5

## OCONEE: NRC inspector should be at plant today or Monday

FROM PAGE A1

have several members of the team come in and look at it. It's just one mechanical specialist who is going to assist the residents in analyzing what happened."

Patterson said Duke will work with the commission.

"We will fully cooperate with the NRC and share with them any information we have discovered so far as part of our own investigation," she said.

Unit No. 1 was shut down early Monday morning, the second shutdown of an Oconee reactor in the past three weeks. Oconee Spokeswoman B.J. Gatten said the radioactive leak was less than one-tenth of a gallon per minute and was inside the secure containment building, meaning it posed no safety threat to the community.

The incident came less than three weeks after Unit No. 3 was manually shut down for several days after leaking seals on a valve actuator prevented the valve from working properly and caused fluctuating flows of feedwater into the unit. That shutdown was the first one at the Oconee plant since August 2010. Gatten said Unit No. 3 is operating at full power. Unit No. 2 is currently shut down in a planned outage for refueling.

Ledford said additional inspectors were not called in when Unit No. 3 was shut down in October.

"The last one was fairly uncomplicated," he said.

ncannada@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6684
Follow on Twitter @NormCannada