Leaking seals cause of Oconee reactor shutdown

BY NORMAN CANNADA
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SENECA — Thursday's shutdown of an Oconee Nuclear Station reactor unit was caused by leaking seals on a valve actuator preventing the valve from working properly and causing fluctuating flows of feedwater into the unit, a Duke Energy spokesman said Friday.

The seals have been replaced, but Unit No. 3 at the nuclear station remained shutdown Friday afternoon while other maintenance work is done on the unit, according to Duke Energy spokesperson B.J. Gatten. She said Duke Energy does not give dates for when units are brought back online.

"While the unit is shut down, Oconee is doing some other maintenance work, too — not things we would have taken the unit down for, but while we're in there we might as well make the most of the time," she said. "It will be restarted once all the repairs and the testing of those repairs are complete."

The shutdown was the first manual tripping of

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SHUTDOWN: Plant operating on one unit

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one of the Oconee units since August 2010, and the first shutdown of Unit No. 3 since 2009. Unit No. 2 is currently shut down because of a planned outage. Gatten said other Duke plants are supplying needed electricity so that customers are not affected, and the issue did not cause any danger to the surrounding community.

Valve actuators are used to control the valves, moving the valves up and down. The seals on the actuator showed signs of leaking, which Gatten said caused the actuator stopped working properly.

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>
> **B.J. Gatten**
> Duke Energy spokeswoman

"The actuator wouldn't work, so that meant that the valve wasn't working properly and that meant that flow of water was oscillating more than it should have," she said. "It should be pretty consistent. It may be higher or lower at times, but the operators control it when it is higher or lower. But, the operators were unable to control this flow because the valve wasn't working. It was fluctuating a lot. The seals have now been replaced."

Gatten added that a review of the response shows that the operators handled the situation properly.

"We've had teams doing a lot of work," she said. "One of the teams was just making sure the operators were following their procedure, and they did."

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