Nuke plant passes safety check

By Anna Simon
Clemson bureau
asimon@greenvilleonline.com

OCONEE NUCLEAR STATION — Oconee Nuclear Station operated safely in the last quarter of 2011, federal regulators said.

Oconee met all safety objectives, according to a letter and statement from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The NRC will meet with Duke Energy officials and the public to discuss the annual assessment from 6-8 p.m. April 9 at the World of Energy at Oconee Nuclear Station, said Sandra Magee, a Duke spokeswoman.

A prior issue involving faulty breakers in the plant's standby shutdown facility won't impair the facility's safety record, according to a second letter from the federal agency specifically related to that issue.

"Our engineers took some positive action to identify this legacy issue," Magee said, adding that the faulty breakers have been replaced with fuses.

Oconee's three reactors on the shore of Lake Keowee and 85 others in the nation's 104-reactor fleet fully met safety performance objectives, according to the NRC.

There's still work ahead for Oconee and all U.S. reactors as they begin to look at higher safety standards recently issued by the NRC to better protect against extreme events, such as an earthquake and tsunami that crippled Japan's Fukushima plant.

NRC assessments "are important markers for us," Magee said. "They help validate our safe operations.

Duke is evaluating the work to be done under the NRC's new post-Fukushima orders, and Oconee has taken some action already, Magee said.