Oconee Nuclear reactor back online

BY NORMAN CANNADA
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SENECA — Oconee Nuclear Station's Unit No. 1 was back online Monday after being shut down for three weeks as a result of a leak in the reactor's containment building.

Duke spokeswoman B.J. Gatten said the process of bringing the reactor back online started Sunday and that Unit No. 1 was operating at 100 percent power Monday.

The unit was shut down Nov. 11 after officials discovered the leak in the containment building. Repairs began on the unit before Thanksgiving. A pipe that provides backup water to the reactor coolant system was identified as the source of the leak.

Gatten said the leak was less than one-tenth of a gallon per minute and was inside the reactor's containment building. She added the leak never posed a threat to the community, and customer service was not interrupted.



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Unit No. 1 at the Oconee Nuclear Station was operating at 100 percent power Monday, three weeks after the reactor was shut down Nov. 11 because of a leak in a containment building.

Gatten said "expert nuclear-qualified welders" were brought in to assist in cutting out the pipe so it can be sent to Duke's metallurgy lab near Charlotte, N.C., for analysis. Information from the lab's analysis is expected to be used to find the "root cause" of the leak.

While officials are continuing to monitor the situation, Gatten said inspections at the plant's two other reactors did not reveal similar problems with pipes there.

The shutdown was the second of an Oconee reactor unit in two months. Unit No. 3 was also manually shut down Oct. 24 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. Unit No. 3 is currently operating at 100 percent power.

Unit No. 2 has been in a planned shutdown for refueling since mid-October.