Oconee nuke plant to receive added oversight

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Although the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual review states that Oconee Nuclear Station operated safely in 2011, the nuclear power plant will receive additional NRC oversight due to a past safety issue.

Federal regulators found that the facility on the shore of Lake Keowee met all NRC safety objectives during 2011, according to the annual assessment that will be discussed in a public meeting at the nuclear plant's World of Energy on April 9.

However, all three of Oconee's reactors will be subject to additional NRC inspections due to a December inspection finding related to a failure to adequately maintain the plant's standby shutdown systems, according to the NRC.

The standby shutdown systems would be used to safely shut down the reactors if normal and emergency systems are unavailable.

Sandra Magee, a Duke Energy spokeswoman, said the problem has been corrected and poses no public safety threat.

The annual assessment "has validated that Oconee Nuclear Station is operating safely," Magee said.

Although there will be added inspections, Oconee is in the NRC's safest performing category, Magee said.

The public meeting will begin with an NRC presentation at 6:30 p.m. The public will have opportunities to ask questions on the safety performance of the plant.