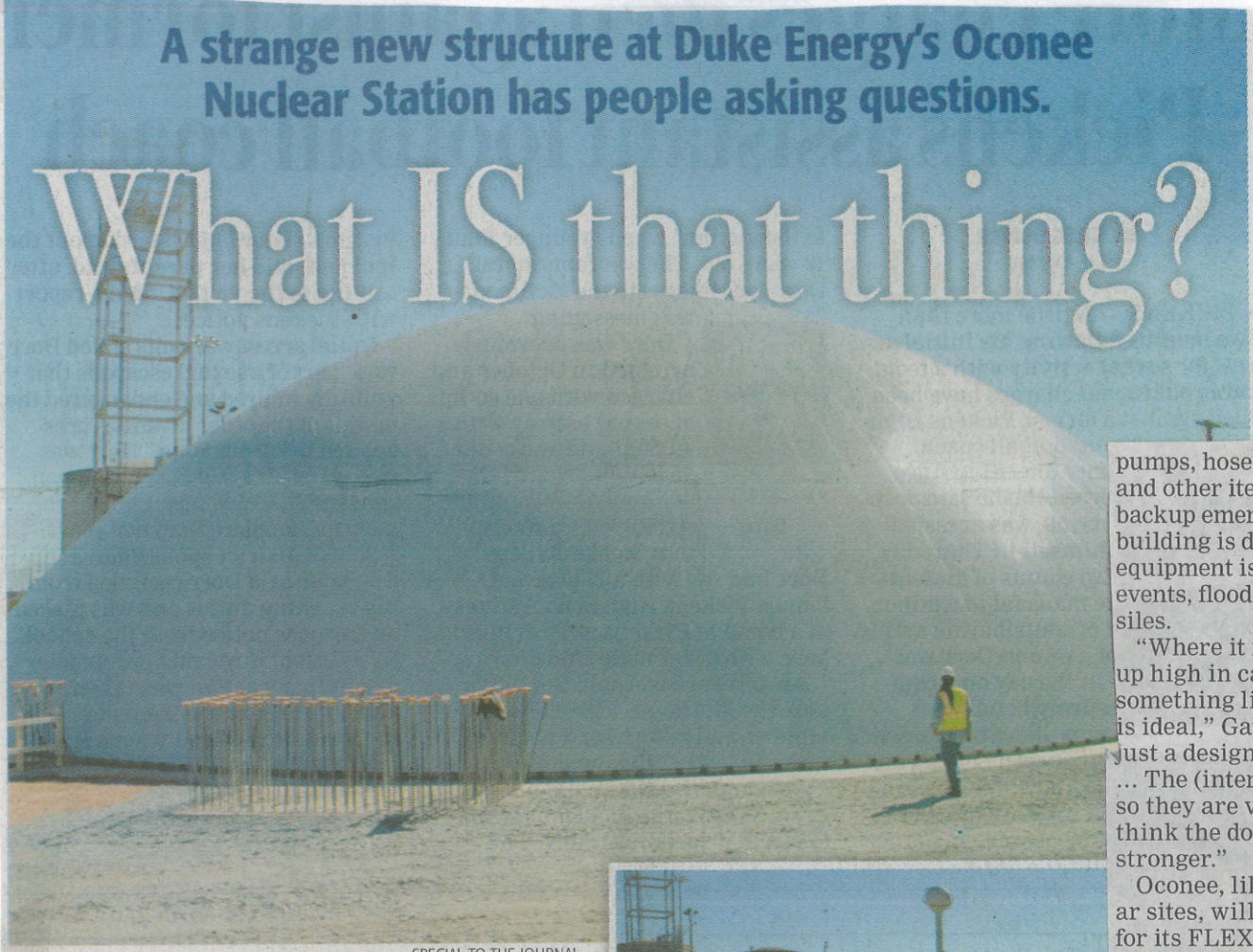
A strange new structure at Duke Energy's Oconee Nuclear Station has people asking questions.

What IS that thing?





SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

These photos show the Oconee Nuclear Station's FLEX storage building before (right) and after (above) it was inflated Oct. 27. The building will house diesel generators, battery packs, diesel-driven pumps, hoses, cables, towing vehicles and other items that can be used as backup emergency equipment and is designed to ensure the equipment is protected from seismic events, flooding and high-wind missiles.

pumps, hoses, cables, towing vehicles and other items that can be used as backup emergency equipment. The building is designed to ensure the equipment is protected from seismic events, flooding and high-wind missiles.

"Where it is is good because it's up high in case there was a flood or something like that, so the location is ideal," Gatten said. "And then it is just a design that Duke has chosen. ... The (interior) walls are concrete, so they are very, very strong. And I think the dome shape also makes it stronger."

Oconee, like three other Duke nuclear sites, will have a monolithic dome for its FLEX structure. The Oconee dome will be 150 feet in diameter, 43 feet tall, with a 24-inch thick concrete shell. The project is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2015.

FLEX building helps station prepare for unknown

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Oconee Nuclear Station's FLEX building has been inflated for more than a month, but the question keeps coming from World of Energy visitors: What is it?

"People stop and come in and ask us, or any visitor that comes in that's seen it asks us," community relations manager B.J. Gatten said. "We get a fair amount of questions."

The answer is the futuristic-looking dome off S.C. Highway 130 near the nuclear plant is the new Oconee FLEX storage building, designed to safely house emergency equipment in case of extreme natural events.

After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the nuclear industry and its regulators began looking more closely at ways to ensure safety is maintained in the face of such natural disasters.

Duke Energy is using the diverse and flexible coping strategy (FLEX) approach and using a combination of installed plant equipment, portable equipment and material stored on site, as well as equipment and material stored at a remote but secure regional location that can be brought on site, if needed, according to a news release.

The approach is designed to build on existing safety approaches to provide another layer of backup safety equipment, and the actions are required by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for all nuclear utilities.

The new FLEX building, which was inflated Oct. 27, will house diesel generators, battery packs, diesel-driven

SEE **THING,** PAGE **A5**

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