

Nuclear station outage still a go

BY ROBERT BENSON
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SENECA — A scheduled refueling of Oconee Nuclear Station's No. 3 reactor will go on as scheduled starting next week with approximately 1,000 out-of-town workers, a Duke Energy spokeswoman confirmed Thursday.

"We are following CDC recommendations and industry best practices to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19," Mikayla Kreuzberger with Duke Energy's corporate communications office said. "We take our actions very seriously, and we expect all teammates to do the same."

Across the nuclear power in-

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OUTAGE: Starts April 11

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dustry, refueling outages typically bring in roughly 1,000 workers.

"I can't provide specifics to Oconee, but I can say that the numbers are similar," Kreuzberger said of the outage, which is set to begin April 11.

Kreuzberger added that all of the workers who come on the site will be screened with a series of questions and temperature checks. Duke Energy is also using phone calls and virtual meeting technology, with Kreuzberger adding, "we have increased social distancing expectations."

Oconee Nuclear Station, which is one of the largest nuclear power plants in the United States, has three reactors that produce enough electricity to power 2 million homes. Every 24 months, a reactor is taken offline and refueled.

"They may be coming, traveling from other places. Some of them may be through a contract organization," Kreuzberger said of the workers.

While at Oconee Nuclear Station, Kreuzberger said they will follow "current and ongoing guidance from federal and state agencies regarding travel for essential services."

Asked if the out-of-town workers would be quarantined when they arrive in Oconee County, Kreuzberg-

er said, "I can just say that they're following the federal and state agencies regarding travel for essential services like an electric utility. We continue to monitor the situation ... as needed. We're working with our contract companies during this process. I don't have that specific information."

Refueling a nuclear power plant is part of its routine maintenance and upkeep. Kreuzberger said Duke Energy just completed one at another power plant and is about to complete a second one in the Carolinas.

"Refueling our reactor is critical so that we can continue to provide electricity to our customers and community," she said. "Now more than ever, our communities are depending on us to continue providing reliable electricity to our region."

The use of out-of-town contract workers is typical during a refueling, Kreuzberger said.

"Scheduled work during our refueling outage does require additional workers who specialize in critical work," she said. "These are dedicated men and women who understand the importance of safety. They're used to following nuclear procedures. They understand our policies."

Kreuzberger said the refueling of the No. 3 reactor is expected to take a few weeks.