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U.S. Nuclear Output Falls to Lowest in Year as PPL Shuts Plant

By Colin McClelland - Apr 5, 2011

U.S. nuclear-power output fell to the lowest level in a year as [PPL Corp. \(PPL\)](#) shut the Susquehanna 2 reactor in [Pennsylvania](#), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said.

Power generation nationwide decreased by 655 megawatts, or 0.9 percent, from yesterday to 76,185 megawatts, or 75 percent of capacity, the smallest amount since April 5, 2010, according to a report today from the NRC and data compiled by Bloomberg. Twenty-four of the nation's 104 reactors were offline.

PPL closed the 1,140-megawatt Susquehanna 2 reactor after it was operating at 88 percent of capacity yesterday. Another unit at the site, the 1,149-megawatt Susquehanna 1, was operating at full capacity. The plant is located in Luzerne County, 50 miles (80 kilometers) northwest of Allentown.

[Duke Energy Corp. \(DUK\)](#) started the 1,100-megawatt McGuire 2 in [North Carolina](#) and boosted the reactor to 10 percent of capacity. Another unit at the site, the 1,100-megawatt McGuire 1, is operating at full power. The plant is located 15 miles north of Charlotte.

[Progress Energy Inc. \(PGN\)](#) said in a statement late yesterday it remained unclear when the 838-megawatt Crystal River reactor in [Florida](#) will start up as it conducts an engineering analysis of concrete damage, or "delamination," in the containment building.

"We are doing a careful and systematic review of the new delamination and the options to return the plant to service," Vincent Dolan, chief executive officer of Progress Energy Florida, said in the statement. "The company cannot estimate a return-to-service date."

Startup Delayed

The unit has been shut for repairs since September 2009. The utility said in August that the reactor would start in the fourth quarter of 2010, then in November delayed that until the first quarter of this year. The plant is located 70 miles north of Tampa, Florida.

The damage occurred during maintenance to replace steam generators, when crews created an opening in the structure that caused separation of a portion of the concrete at the periphery of the containment building.

Raleigh, North Carolina-based Progress spent about \$150 million on the repair and \$290 million on replacement power costs to Dec. 31, it said in yesterday's statement. Insurance covered \$181 million, the company said.

[NextEra Energy Inc. \(NEE\)](#) boosted the 839-megawatt Saint Lucie 1 reactor in Florida to 92 percent of capacity from 80 percent yesterday. Another reactor at the plant, the 839-megawatt Saint Lucie 2, was shut. The station is located about 45 miles north of Palm Beach.

Georgia Reactor

[Southern Co. \(SO\)](#) increased output from the 1,109-megawatt Vogtle 1 reactor in Georgia to 87 percent of capacity from 80 percent yesterday. The unit is returning from an outage that began March 7.

The plant is located 26 miles southeast of Augusta. Another reactor at the site, the 1,127-megawatt Vogtle 2, is operating at full capacity.

[FirstEnergy Corp. \(FE\)](#) increased output at the 1,235-megawatt Perry nuclear reactor in [Ohio](#) to 86 percent of capacity from 80 percent yesterday. The plant is located on Lake Erie about 35 miles northeast of [Cleveland](#). FirstEnergy is based in Akron, Ohio.

Some reactors close for maintenance and refueling during the spring and fall in the U.S., when demand for heating and cooling is lower. The outages can increase consumption of natural gas and coal to generate electricity.

The average U.S. reactor [refueling outage](#) lasted 41 days in 2009, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute.

To contact the reporter on this story: Colin McClelland in Toronto at cmcclelland1@bloomberg.net

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Dan Stets at dstets@bloomberg.net.