

Inspectors find hole drilled in pipe at nuclear power plant

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FLORIDA CITY - Officials conducting a routine inspection of a nuclear reactor at the Turkey Point power plant found a small hole drilled into a pipe that helps maintain pressure, and investigators were trying to determine if the hole was drilled accidentally or deliberately, Florida Power & Light officials said Saturday.

The nuclear reactor, one of two at the Miami-Dade County power plant, had been shut down for a routine refueling, FPL spokeswoman Rachel Scott said.

The 1/8-inch hole was discovered late Thursday during a series of tests and inspections performed before bringing the unit back online, Scott said.

Other maintenance work had been performed in the area where the hole was found, Scott said.

FPL, the state's largest electric utility, repaired the damaged piping and, though the company's investigation continues, plans to bring the unit back into service in about a week, she said.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and FBI are also conducting their own investigations.

"We want to make sure that we do a very thorough investigation and that we evaluate all possibilities," Scott said.

FPL customers were not affected by the routine shutdown, Scott said. The power plant's second nuclear unit as well as two units powered by oil and natural gas were fully operational, and the plant was in no danger, she said.

Florida City is about 30 miles southwest of Miami.

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