Beat: Technology

Accident at Arkansas nuclear plant kills 1, injures 3

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USPA News - One worker was killed Sunday and three others were injured when a heavy piece of equipment fell on them while moving it out of a turbine building at a nuclear power plant in Arkansas, the plant`s operator said. Health authorities said there was no danger to the public.

The accident occurred at around 7:45 a.m. local time on Sunday when a group of workers was moving a generator stator out of the turbine building at Arkansas Nuclear One, a two-unit nuclear power plant in the city of Russellville, approximately 58 miles (93 kilometers) northwest of Little Rock. Entergy Corporation, which owns and operates the plant, said both units are now in a stable shutdown condition and there is no danger to the public. "Unit 1 is in a refueling outage and Unit 2, which was operating at full power, automatically shut down," a company statement said. Jeff Forbes, executive vice president and chief nuclear officer at Entergy, confirmed one worker was killed while three others were injured and transported to a nearby hospital. "We are deeply saddened by what has happened today," he said. "Our greatest sympathy is with the family and friends of the employee who lost his life, and with those who sustained injuries." After the accident, which took place in a non-radiation area, plant operators declared an "unusual event," the lowest of four emergency classifications designated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). "Additional staff has been brought to the site to manage the situation," the company said. The exact cause of Sunday`s accident was not immediately known, but both state and federal authorities are expected to join the investigation. "I want to express my sorrow and support to all those who work at Arkansas Nuclear One," Forbes added. "I know this is especially hard on them." Unit 1 began commercial operations in December 1974, followed by the introduction of Unit 2 in March 1980. According to Entergy, the two units supply 1,823 megawatts of power, which is equal to approximately 30 percent of the total energy demand of the state. The nuclear plant has approximately 950 employees.

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