Ceremony, marker honor Shippingport plant

Shippingport's anniversary celebration was held on December 18, 2007, 50 years to the day after it first generated electricity and sent it to the Pittsburgh region.

FIRSTENERGY CORP.'S BEAVER Valley nuclear power plant recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of its predecessor facility, the Shippingport Atomic Power Station, with the unveiling of a commemorative marker. Shippingport was the nation's first commercial nuclear power plant.

During the 1950s, President Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted to use nuclear technology that had been gained from World War II's atomic weapons program for a peaceful purpose. His administration decided to use fission to generate electricity for the United States, and a partnership consisting of the Atomic Energy Commission, Westinghouse Corporation, and Duquesne Light Company was formed to build the Shippingport plant, in western Pennsylvania.

Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program became a reality on December 18, 1957, when the newly constructed Shippingport plant generated electricity and sent it to the Pittsburgh region for the first time. Fifty years later, on December 18, 2007, more than 50 Shippingport alumni and guests attended the unveiling of the "Golden Anniversary" marker honoring the historic plant. The marker is located at the training center of the Beaver Valley plant, just a few hundred yards from where the Shippingport plant once stood.

Pete Sena, site vice president at the Beaver Valley nuclear power plant, unveils Shippingport's 50th anniversary plaque. (Photos: FirstEnergy Corp.)

In addition to generating electricity, Shippingport was an educational and scientific facility that provided the foundation for today's nuclear power industry. Shippingport operated until 1982 and then became the first nuclear power plant in the United States to be decommissioned. The site was cleaned up in the late 1980s and was released for unrestricted use.

Shippingport alumni pose with the 50th anniversary plaque.

Shippingport Atomic Power Station time line

1953: The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission awards Westinghouse Electric Corporation a contract to design a nuclear plant for electric utility use as part of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program.

1954: Duquesne Light Company is selected on the basis of competitive proposals to design and construct the nonnuclear portion of the plant and to operate the entire plant.

September 6, 1954: Ground is broken for the Shippingport Atomic Power Station, in western Pennsylvania, by President Eisenhower using a remote control device to start a bulldozer to move the first dirt.

October 1957: The first nuclear core is lowered into place.

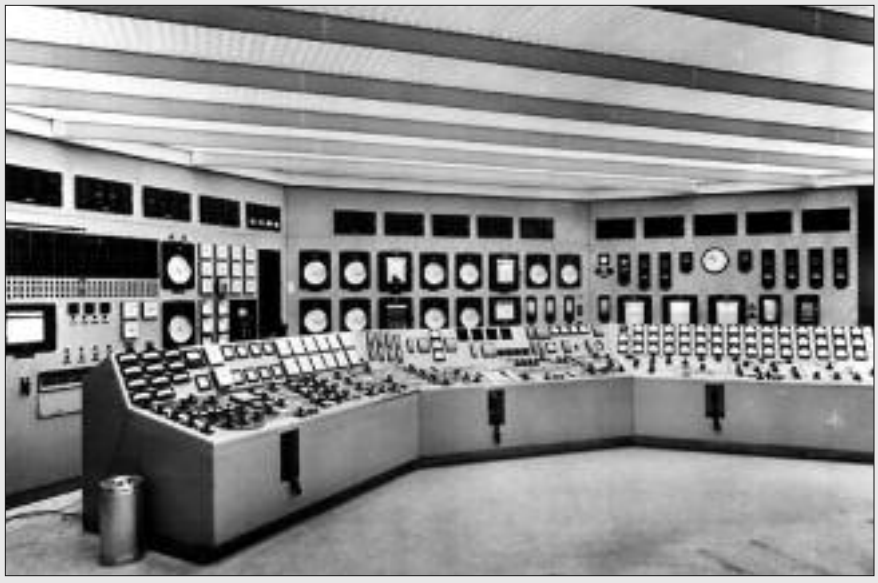
December 2, 1957: Shippingport's reactor achieves initial criticality.

December 18, 1957: Electricity is first sent to the Pittsburgh area.

December 23, 1957: Full power of 68 MW is achieved.

May 26, 1958: Shippingport is officially dedicated with a ceremony attended by national and international dignitaries.

1964: The second nuclear reactor core is installed at Shippingport.



A historical photo from October 1957 shows Shippingport's control room just weeks before the plant sent electricity for the first time to the Pittsburgh area.

April 30, 1965: The second core is placed in service and electrical generation is increased from 68 MW to 100 MW.

February 1974: The second core is shut down. As part of the federal government's efforts to expand the nation's sources of energy, it is decided that a light water breeder reactor (LWBR) core under development and fabrication will be the third reactor core for Shippingport.

December 2, 1977: President Jimmy Carter orders the LWBR to 100 percent power.

October 1, 1982: Shippingport is permanently removed from service.

1984 to 1989: The decommissioning of Shippingport takes place. It is the first decommissioning of a nuclear power plant and is overseen by the Department of Energy. The Shippingport site is restored to a natural state, safe enough to be used for any purpose in the future.

December 1999: FirstEnergy Corp. acquires Beaver Valley Units 1 and 2 (and the Shippingport site) from Duquesne Light Company.

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or a new ESBWR at River Bend, for which Entergy will submit an S-COL on its own, perhaps as early as May.

PALO VERDE

Action letter revised as APS addresses issues

Arizona Public Service Company's (APS) three-unit Palo Verde plant is currently the most heavily overseen nuclear power facility in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Reactor Oversight Process (ROP), with two reactors in the "degraded cornerstone" column of the ROP's action matrix, and the other in the "multiple/repetitive degraded cornerstone" column. Palo Verde's standing in the action matrix will not be improved overnight, but the NRC now believes that APS is ready to take corrective actions. On February 15, the NRC revised the confirmatory action letter on Palo Verde that had been in effect since last June, noting the completion of three of the five required actions and specifying the use of APS's site integrated improvement plan (SIIP) to address the other two.

Palo Verde has had a variety of performance problems in recent years, but the ones that led to the current ROP status were the 2004 discovery of voids in containment sump safety injection piping at all three reactors and two failures of an emergency diesel generator at Unit 3 in 2006. The former was color-coded yellow (signifying moderate to high safety significance) and the latter was coded white (low to moderate significance). The first of the five actions listed in the confirmatory action letter was to address root and contributing causes of the yellow and white findings, and this is one of the two incomplete actions carried over to the revised letter. The other incomplete task is to improve two crosscutting areas: human performance, and problem identification and resolution. In the NRC's view, APS has completed the other three actions: an independent safety culture assessment, development of an improvement plan, and submission of the plan to the NRC.

The SIIP includes 15 action plans, each with anywhere from five to 12 strategies, plus details of how success is to be measured and schedules for effectiveness reviews. There are not, however, fixed deadlines for the SIIP or any of its parts to be completed. The revised NRC letter, and APS's SIIP, are available for download from the NRC's Web site, at <www.nrc.gov>, through the ADAMS document retrieval system, with the accession number ML080460653.

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