

# Telling the nuclear power story

Touring the exhibits at the Carolina Power and Light Co. Brunswick Nuclear Plant visitors center near Southport can put the visitor inside the control room of the twin nuclear reactors.

Well, not exactly.

But a replica lets people know what the control room is like at the center located on N. C. 87/133 north of Southport. It's open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Groups can call for appointments, 457-6041. Individuals can tour anytime during regular hours.

The best thing about the center is that persons can see much more than they would see on an actual tour of the plant. Exhibits show how the turbines look, how the generators work, how the walls were constructed -- things you cannot see inside the actual plant.

Last year, the center welcomed more than 9,500 visitors, including school groups, tourists and curious local residents who want to know more about nuclear energy and how the plant operates. CP&L operates two generating units that represent an initial cost of \$790 million and a total investment of \$1.7 billion. Unit 2 began commercial operation first in November, 1975. Unit 1 came on-line in March, 1977.

Electricity from the Brunswick plant is used throughout CP&L's 30,000-square-mile service area, covering much of eastern and central North Carolina, the Asheville area and north-central South Carolina. The plant produces about 25 percent of all electricity supplied to CP&L customers.

The reality is nuclear power is a process which most people find confusing. The visitors center is designed to educate, inform and interest all ages as to how power is actually generated. Visitors can walk into a replica of the control room and get a feel for what it is like to be in an actual operations center.

The most popular exhibit is the bicycle generator. All ages, children to adults, want to see how much electricity they can generate by pedaling cycles. In less than an hour, visitors have a grasp of nuclear power and can get answers from the center staff to their most-asked questions. There is also a picnic area at the center and place for visitors to sign in and leave comments.

The most recent exhibits show steps taken by CP&L to protect marine life. At the mouth of the plant's intake canal, a diversion screen has been installed to block large marine life and debris from the Cape Fear River. It includes a traveling screen which moves up and down beneath the water, catching smaller marine life. Spray nozzles gently spray organisms off the screens and into a trough called the



"slide of life."

Other exhibits show plant life unique to Brunswick County that can continue to thrive in the shadow of a nuclear plant -- carnivorous plants like the Venus flytrap, sundew, pitcher plant and butterwort. The nuclear plant strives to strike a balance between providing electricity and preserving the environment.

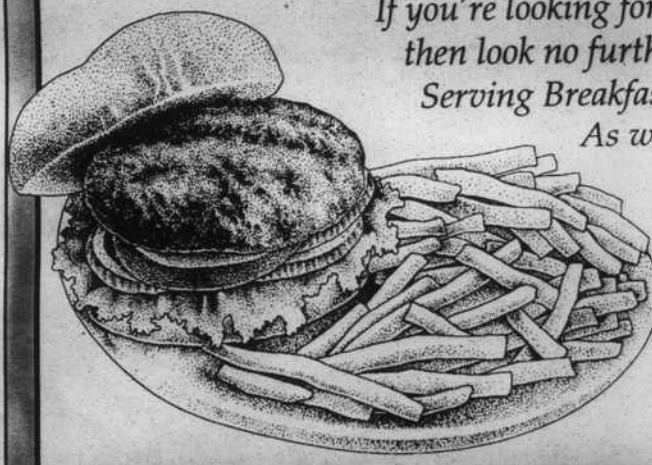
The control room replica gives vis-

itors a sense of the "nerve center" where licensed reactor operators command all plant operations. From their stations, operators can tell from a glance how equipment is functioning, make adjustments and regulate the flow of electricity. At least five licensed operators and five auxiliary operators are on duty in the plant at all times, day and night.

What visitors can also see are displays of the steel liners and reinforcement patterns within the walls of the primary containment unit. It keeps radioactive materials from reaching the environment and protects the reactors and cooling systems from outside occurrences. These are in addition to approximately 30 exhibits on electricity, nuclear power and energy conservation.

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