

Belgium: Possible flaw in nuclear plant

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(AP) — A possible hairline crack in the steel tank containing the reactor at a Belgian nuclear plant poses no danger to the public, the country's nuclear regulatory agency said Friday.

The possible flaw was discovered while the plant was shut for annual maintenance, Karina De Beule, a spokeswoman for AFCN, the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control, said Friday. She said the potential problem will keep the Doel 3 plant, which is north of Antwerp, offline at least until the end of August.

Asked if there was danger to the public, De Beule said, "Of course not. Even if we were to discover a fissure, not every fissure is a problem."

The annual inspection process worked as it should, De Beule told the Associated Press.

She also said that Belgium had immediately notified other countries using nuclear energy of the possible problem, so that they could check to see if their reactors use the same kind of tanks. Similarly, Belgium constantly receives information from other countries about the operations of their plants, she said.

"That's the normal way of working in the nuclear sector," she said.

Marlene Holzner, a European Union spokeswoman, confirmed Friday that Belgium had swiftly notified other countries. Assuring the safety of the plants falls to national authorities rather than to the EU, Holzner said

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