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**Oil spill wiped up at reactor
Workers' error causes 3,000 gallon deluge**

Michael Whiteley Star-Telegram Writer

Cleanup crews for TU Electric and its contractors worked yesterday to clean up nearly 3,000 gallons of heavy-weight oil that spilled from a turbine system at Comanche Peak nuclear power plant, a utility spokesman confirmed last night. TU Electric spokesman Jerry Lee said 90-weight generator oil gushed for nearly five minutes after a pipe was mistakenly opened while workers tried to clean the turbine's hydraulic systems about midnight Monday.

He said the heavy oil covered the second floor of the plant's turbine generator building, spilled onto the ground level and leaked into the plant's drainage system before operators could shut it off.

But he said none of the oil reached the plant grounds or nearby Squaw Creek Reservoir, which supplies the reactor's cooling water. He said workers notified the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Texas Water Commission of the spill.

"What they got was like a gusher, and it was open and flowing and there was no way to close it back down," Lee said. "It was one of those things that we wished had not happened. But at this point, it is cleaned up and the facility is in excellent shape."

The incident occurred about 30 days after TU Electric officials shut down the plant and ordered major repairs on one of its steam-driven turbines. Lee said utility officials hastened a normal maintenance shutdown after they discovered turbine damage during a routine inspection.

He said the plant probably will remain down for turbine repairs through the end of May.

The giant turbine system runs in part on a hydraulic system that uses about 20,000 gallons of the oil, Lee said. He said four teams of workers were operating the system with a set of strainers used to clean the oil when the accident occurred.

"The contractors who were working thought they had clearance from the control room to open the system, when they did not," Lee said.

Teams at three of the outlets spotted the flow in time to avoid spillage, he said. But oil in the fourth area of the system gushed out of a pipe and onto the second-level deck of the turbine building.

NRC spokesman Joe Gilliland said that the agency's on-site inspectors were notified of the spill early yesterday and that the spill constituted no safety threat to the plant.