

France's EDF reports fresh crack in nuclear reactor pipe

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The crack was discovered in a cooling pipe at a reactor on the Channel coast.

French energy group EDF has reported discovering a significant new crack in a cooling pipe at a nuclear power plant on the Channel coast, in the latest such incident to plague the energy sector.

The group has been beset by maintenance problems at its aging fleet of reactors over the last year that has forced it to take more than a dozen offline for checks and emergency repairs.

The group last month reported a "serious corrosion problem" on an emergency cooling system at its Penly 1 plant in northern France which was among the 16 taken offline in the last year.

The report went largely unnoticed until it was covered in French media on Tuesday.

The new crack was 15.5 centimeters (six inches) long and up to 2.3 centimeters deep, covering around a quarter of the circumference of the pipe which is 2.7 centimeters thick, France's Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) said late on Tuesday.

The regulator ordered EDF to "revise its strategy" of addressing the corrosion problems which could have major financial repercussions for the debt-laden state-owned utility as well as France's energy production capacity.

The country, once a leading electricity exporter in Europe, needed to import power from Germany and other neighbors over the winter because of the problems in its nuclear park, which normally supplies around 70 percent of its [energy](#) needs.

The crack at Penly does not pose an immediate danger to the environment or human life, the regulator said, given its location on a pipe system that is designed to be used to cool the reactor only in the event of an emergency.

"What is new... is the depth of the crack," nuclear safety expert Yves Maignac, who is an advisor to the ASN, told AFP.

The agency's deputy director, Julien Collet, said checks underway would likely take longer but they won't shut down all [power plants](#) at once.

"There won't be huge numbers of shutdowns for months, but there will be an impact on the length of shutdowns," he said.

EDF's debt ballooned to 64.5 billion euros (\$68.6 billion) in 2022 while losses totalled 17.9 billion euros.

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