

# Day in the life of a plant operator



THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2016 - It's Monday morning, and Ron Green and his colleagues are busier than ever in the control room at Plant McDonough-Atkinson in Smyrna, monitoring the plant's units after a scheduled maintenance outage the week before.

Bringing one of the plant's three natural gas combined-cycle units back on line after an outage is precise work, so visitors from Mitsubishi, the manufacturer of the gas turbines, are also there to oversee any final tweaks or adjustments that need to be made.

"That's not unusual," explained Green, a general plant operator. "With gas turbines like these, you have to do some fine-tuning because they are just that sensitive."

Green is responsible for fire protection and the plant's steam turbines. Safety is an integral component of the job. Every day begins with a job safety briefing (JSB) to make sure all are aware of any potential safety concerns.

"So basically there is an engineer who is over those systems and that equipment, and my job is to assist him by being his ears and eyes in the field," Green said. "I check the equipment over, write any work orders that need to be taken care of, things of that nature."

He works 12-hour shifts, usually beginning at 5:30 a.m. or 6 a.m. There's really no such thing as a typical day, Green said, but typical duties include time in the control room monitoring an impressive-looking panorama of screens that constantly monitor the plant's performance.

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## Day in the life *continued*

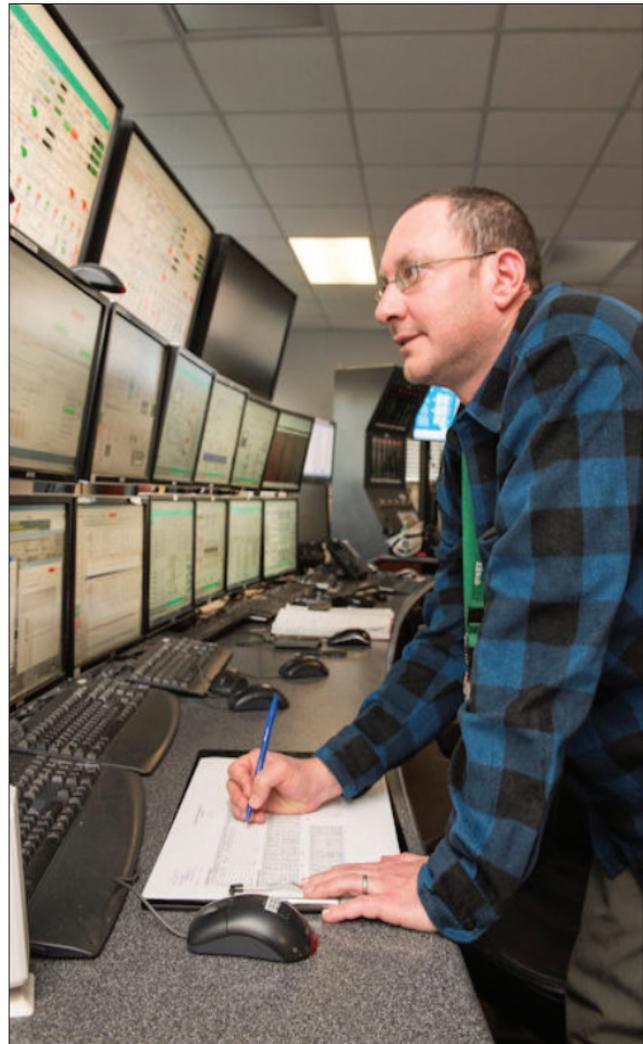
Each operator in the control room – one for each unit – scans a bank of about 15 computer screens that offer real-time information on three different operating systems and what are called “balance of plant” functions.

“This kind of job requires you to think quickly,” Green said. “You are analyzing screens and situations constantly – they are not like coal units at all. In addition to those 15 screens, there are so many pages within those screens – you are constantly monitoring levels and conditions.”

Green also works outside quite a bit, periodically patrolling the futuristic-looking units to test fire safety equipment and examine the various gauges, valves and pumps that are monitored on control room screens.

“Every day is different,” he said. “Any given day, I can be on the board one hour, then outside another hour and then working with contractors coming in, assisting them with what they need to do.”

Green, a Cobb County native, joined Georgia Power in 2004 after a career in the U.S. Air Force. He started as an auxiliary equipment operator at Plant McDonough when it was still a coal plant. He later moved to Plant Bowen for a short stint as an assistant boiler turbine operator and came back to McDonough as a boiler turbine operator.



“When they announced the coal plant was going away, I began to prepare myself,” Green said. “I began practice interviewing and studying – lot of studying, getting familiar with how these units operated. I asked a lot of questions.”

McDonough’s relatively small staff, especially compared with that at a coal plant, means he and his colleagues have to be able to perform a variety of functions, Green said.

“You’re always helping each other out,” Green said. “We have a great group of employees here. In this kind of environment, we depend on each other a lot.”