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NEWS

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Coastal Commission Approves Spent Fuel Inspection and Maintenance Program

ROSEMEAD, Calif., July 16, 2020 — The California Coastal Commission today approved an inspection and maintenance program (IMP) for spent nuclear fuel storage at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. The meeting was held virtually due to physical distancing requirements. The program applies to the Holtec UMAX dry fuel storage facility at San Onofre, which was licensed for operation in 2015. The commission voted unanimously to approve the program, following the staff recommendation.

Southern California Edison developed the program in response to a special condition of the 2015 Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI) Coastal Development Permit issued by the commission. Before today's vote, an independent engineering firm hired by the commission reviewed the program. The firm concluded the program is sufficient to "detect degradation and effectively observe the ISFSI system through 2035," according to the staff report.

"Through this process of fulfilling our commitment to the commission and to the local community, SCE has developed a comprehensive, industry-leading program that ensures dry fuel storage canisters remain in a physical condition to support transportation once an off-site facility is available," said Doug Bauder, SCE vice president and chief nuclear officer. "We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the commission on maintaining the spent fuel canisters at SONGS in a safe condition."

Under the program, beginning in 2024, two spent fuel storage canisters will be inspected every five years, and the San Onofre test canister will be inspected every 2 1/2 years. The test canister, a first for the industry, is an electrically heated, full-scale canister simulator (containing no spent fuel) used to model potential effects of storage over time. Inspection results will be reported to the commission.

In the program, SCE selected a metallic overlay repair process in the unlikely event a canister should require a repair. This method combines the robotic visual assessment capability previously used to inspect canisters at San Onofre with metallic overlay technology, which is a high-energy, solid-state coating and powder application. SCE successfully demonstrated this process at San Onofre in December.

The program describes inspection and maintenance activities for the Holtec dry fuel storage system through 2035. After this initial 20-year period of operation for an ISFSI, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission requires licensees to conduct canister inspections as part of an Aging Management Program (AMP). The AMP would be submitted as part of the ISFSI license renewal process, likely in 2034.

SCE submitted the program to the commission in March for review. It was originally due in 2022 but the date was pulled forward last October as part of the 2019 Coastal Development Permit for decommissioning the SONGS site.

(more)

San Onofre's operations to move fuel from wet storage in pools to dry storage are expected to be complete next month.

For more information about San Onofre, visit songscommunity.com and follow us on Twitter (@SCE_SONGS) and Facebook (@SONGScommunitypage).

About Southern California Edison
An Edison International (NYSE: EIX) company, Southern California Edison is one of the nation's largest electric utilities, serving a population of approximately 15 million via 5 million customer accounts in a 50,000-square-mile service area within Central, Coastal and Southern California.

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San Onofre Begins New Chapter as Fuel Transfer Operations End

ROSEMEAD, Calif., Aug. 7, 2020 — The decommissioning effort at the San Onofre nuclear plant achieved a major milestone today when the last of 73 spent nuclear fuel canisters was safely stored in the Holtec dry storage system. The fuel is now one step closer to being ready for relocation to an off-site facility when one becomes available. Currently, no such federally licensed facility exists.

Both wet storage of spent fuel in pools of water and dry storage in welded stainless-steel canisters are extremely safe. However, dry storage offers additional safety benefits: The dry storage systems at San Onofre have more than twice the seismic rating as the spent fuel pools, and dry storage requires no electricity because the fuel is convection cooled with ambient air.

“Our commitment remains ensuring spent nuclear fuel is safely stored and that it can be transported to an off-site facility in the future,” said Doug Bauder, SCE vice president and chief nuclear officer. “We are developing a strategic plan to help us explore opportunities for advancing various alternatives to get the spent fuel off-site, as well as make sure that our fuel is ready for pickup when the opportunity presents itself.”

SCE expects to release the strategic plan early next year. It will explore alternatives for relocating San Onofre’s spent fuel to an off-site facility, either for permanent disposal or temporary storage, and identify actions that SCE can take to advance various alternatives. The plan also will include opportunities to collaborate with like-minded stakeholders and the community.

A New Chapter

With all the spent fuel — 123 canisters, including the 50 in the TN-NUHOMS system — in dry storage, most of the plant now becomes a deconstruction site. SCE issued a Notice of Deconstruction in January, and work to dismantle San Onofre began the following month. Initial projects included asbestos removal from inside the containment domes and shipping the Unit 1 reactor pressure vessel to a disposal facility in Clive, Utah. Both have been completed successfully. In the next couple of months, offices will be relocated to new trailers in a parking lot on the north side of the site. That will clear the way for building demolition to begin early next year. Employees who can continue to telework due to COVID-19 guidelines are doing so.

“For the next stages at San Onofre, we’ve developed a streamlined organization that is focused on providing oversight of our decommissioning contractor and safely managing the spent fuel,” Bauder said. “Much of the work coming up will be inside the containment domes and preparing for the removal of lots of steel and concrete.”

That material will be mostly transported via railcar to disposal sites in Utah, Arizona and Texas. For the duration of the project, SCE will continue to issue quarterly updates to surrounding residents on activity at San Onofre. These are also available on the SONGScommunity website.

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