SONGS CEP Compilation of Public Email Communications

September 14 thru November 3, 2026

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1. For Awareness: San Onofre's nuclear waste is stored on the beach: Will another community agree to take it?

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Tuesday, November 3, 2026 10:44 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Dan Whitley; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: San Onofre's nuclear waste is stored on the beach: Will another community agree to take it?

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share an article from CalMatters regarding Rep. Mike Levin's efforts to move the used nuclear fuel offsite.

https://apple.news/A9C9XhLKgQEK6G3nvnnd3pg

ENVIRONMENT

San Onofre's nuclear waste is stored on the beach: Will another community agree to take it?



BY DEBORAH BRENNAN

NOVEMBER 2, 2026



San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in San Diego County on Aug. 21, 2026. Photo by Allen J. Schaben, Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

IN SUMMARY

San Onofre's nuclear waste has been stored on a beach for years. This lawmaker wants to find a community willing to take it.

Welcome to CalMatters, the only nonprofit newsroom devoted solely to covering issues that affect all Californians. Sign up for WhatMatters to receive the latest news and commentary on the most important issues in the Golden State.

If Rep. Mike Levin's proposal moves forward, the spent nuclear fuel stashed on the beach at San Onofre will be stored and processed at one of several potential campuses in other states.

Levin, a Democratic congress member representing parts of San Diego and Orange County, discussed his plan from a point above the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station last week.

"Since I've been in Congress, getting this spent nuclear fuel off our coast has been one of my top priorities," Levin said, overlooking the Pacific Ocean and the steel and concrete canisters housing nuclear fuel rods. "I have been in this fight for eight years, fighting the status quo of inaction on spent nuclear fuel."

He's pushing to create facilities called Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses in communities that want to recycle some of the spent fuel and store remaining waste, in exchange for economic development opportunities.

The Department of Energy said the campuses could "attract significant investment, expand domestic manufacturing, and create thousands of new high-paying jobs in their respective regions." Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Idaho have stepped up as potential hosts for the facilities.

Finland and Canada have embarked on similar efforts to locate nuclear waste facilities, with the consent and collaboration of local communities, according to a report by Levin's office. Finland expects to permanently dispose of nuclear waste as soon as next year.

Levin said similar U.S. sites could begin operation by the late 2030s, and he's pushing to make the San Onofre plant a priority for nuclear waste removal and storage.

San Onofre ceased operating in 2013, after a newly installed steam generator failed, leaving the plant inoperable. Officials began decommissioning the plant in 2020.

Since then, 700 million tons of building material have been hauled away from the site, and the spent fuel rods were moved from cooling pools to dry storage on the beach, Levin said.

But there isn't a permanent repository for the spent nuclear fuel, following backlash to an earlier proposal to store the waste.

"The federal government still hasn't done what it pledged to do all the way back in 1998, and so communities like ours have been left holding the fuel," Levin said.

The federal government previously designated the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository in Nevada as the permanent storage site for nuclear waste. But former president Barack Obama cancelled that plan in 2010,

Without a permanent storage repository, spent nuclear fuel has remained on site at San Onofre, where its location on the coast, near earthquake faults and next to Camp Pendleton make the waste vulnerable to natural disaster or national security threats.

To address those risks, Levin introduced the Spent Fuel Prioritization Act with co-authors including Rep. Darrell Issa, a San Diego Republican, and Rep. Young Kim, an Orange County Republican. It would move nuclear sites with high seismic hazards, large populations and national security risk, such as San Onofre, up the list for fuel removal and storage. The bill is waiting for consideration in the House Energy and Commerce Committee, according to Levin's 2026 report on San Onofre.

Another challenge concerns transport of spent nuclear fuel. Levin said next year a specially designed train called the Atlas Railcar System will complete testing and move the first spent fuel rods from Virginia to Idaho. The Atlas is a 12-axle railcar equipped with sensors and monitoring systems, which can transport nearly half a million pounds of spent nuclear fuel, according to the Department of Energy. It took ten years and cost $33 million dollars to build.

Levin has also introduced bills to create a nuclear waste administration, to require nuclear waste canisters to last 100 years instead of the current 40 years, and to increase public engagement and improve safety inspection at decommissioning power plants.

"I will not declare victory on this until the last canister has left San Onofre," he said.

deborah@calmatters.org - Deborah Sullivan Brennan is the San Diego reporter for CalMatters, covering regional stories from a statewide angle. She writes about life, politics, the economy and environment in San Diego County. She... **More by Deborah Brennan**

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)
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2. For Awareness: Is the nuclear waste at San Onofre safe from high tides and El Nino?

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Monday, November 2, 2026 8:47 AM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Dan Whitley; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: Is the nuclear waste at San Onofre safe from high tides and El Nino?

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share a recent article in the San Diego Union Tribune regarding the SONGS plant and El Nino weather conditions. The link and full article are provided below.

https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2026/10/29/is-the-nuclear-waste-at-san-onofre-safe-from-high-tides-and-el-nino/

Is the nuclear waste at San Onofre safe from high tides and El Niño?

More than 3 million pounds of spent fuel sit inside canisters on the north end of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station



A photo taken on Dec. 30, 2025 from the beach in front of the San Onofre Generating Station. The foreground shows riprap and cages that prevent rocks from blocking valves that allow storm water to discharge from the facility, as well as a first wall which is part of the pedestrian walkway. The taller wall in the background is the seawall that protects Unit 1. (Rob Nikolewski/The San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **Rob Nikolewski** | rob.nikolewski@sduniontribune.com

PUBLISHED: October 29, 2026 at 5:28 PM PDT | UPDATED: October 29, 2026 at 5:40 PM PDT

Forecasters warn of coastal flooding and high tides in Southern California, but officials at Southern California Edison say dozens of stored canisters containing nuclear waste at the now-shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station pose no public safety threats — even if rainfall in the coming months is heavier than expected.

But longtime critics of the plant, which is in the midst of an eight-year dismantlement project, say they are not reassured.

The National Weather Service has issued a Coastal Flood Advisory for San Diego and Orange counties through noon Friday, with high tides expected to crest near 7.25 feet.

“It’s definitely seasonal,” said Adam Roser, meteorologist at the San Diego office of the weather service. “We see these higher tides every late fall into winter, but this year we have warmer than average water temperatures.”

Showers are expected through Saturday morning, with heavier rainfall expected Saturday afternoon or evening and lingering into Sunday.

The precipitation is part of a larger El Niño weather pattern that meteorologists expect to see for the rest of this fall and into winter.

“Ocean temperatures in the Pacific near the equator are very warm, much above average,” Roser said. “That in turn can create a rainier atmosphere over the ocean, so the southern tier of the United States usually sees a more wet winter.”

But Roser was quick to add that sometimes — as was the case at the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016 — a strong El Niño can result in dry conditions across Southern California.

Some 3.55 million pounds of nuclear waste at the former San Onofre power plant, known as SONGS for short, have been deposited into a pair of storage facilities located at the north end of the site.

One storage facility contains 73 stainless steel canisters containing radioactive spent fuel that have been lowered into vertical cavities. The other holds 50 canisters that are stacked horizontally.

An additional 13 canisters of material from the dismantlement efforts, which are classified as greater than Class C waste, sit in the horizontal storage site.

The canisters rest a little more than 100 feet from the Pacific, protected by a seawall 28 feet high, as measured at average low tide at San Onofre Beach.

The prospect of what some have called a “Super El Niño,” along with a succession of high tides, makes lifelong Del Mar resident Alice McNally worried about the waste stored at SONGS.

The seawall “is not very thick and it’s also in bad shape and it’s crumbling,” she said, adding, “I don’t think the seawall is any protection at all.”

McNally is also concerned about what would happen to the canisters if water seeps into or floods the SONGS storage facilities, as well as the impacts of long-term coastal erosion in and around San Onofre Beach.

“The problem is when the canisters get wet, it’s not just water, it’s sand and debris, seaweed and little rocks. Those are gonna go down in there,” McNally said.

Manuel Camargo, principal manager for strategic planning for Southern California Edison, insists the facility and the spent nuclear fuel stored there are safe from the elements.



Crews worked on Oct. 28, 2026, to add boulders along the sea wall of the now-shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. The seawall is 28 feet high, as measured at average low tide at San Onofre Beach, but can get hit by waves during heavy surf. (Photo by Laylan Connelly, Staff Writer)

“The SONGS plant is a relatively unique structure along the coastline,” Camargo said. “It was designed to protect the plant itself and, of course, by extension, the spent nuclear fuel. It is in fact designed to withstand very extreme climate events.”

Camago said the spent fuel canisters in both the horizontal and vertical systems are designed to protect them from being submerged in 50 feet or more of water and withstand velocity of up to 15 feet per second.

He said the seawall, which goes down below the water level and safeguards against erosion, is robust and “has protected and will continue to protect the site (from coastal conditions) like Kelvin waves, El Niño processes, all that.”

Kelvin waves are slow-moving, warm-water waves that can stretch thousands of miles. During an El Niño event, they often form as a series of successive waves that can occur over the span of months.

Camargo said SONGS officials receive an annual assessment of sea-level rise that is then reviewed by an engineering team to confirm that the facility's design analysis of critical components remains sound. The most recent report, delivered earlier this year, was produced by an independent environmental consulting firm based in La Jolla.

At the same time, Edison officials have long said that the canisters need to find another home.

"SONGS was never intended to be a permanent facility for the storage of spent nuclear fuel," Camargo said.

Nuclear waste at SONGS is not unique.

Roughly 95,000 metric tons of spent fuel that has accumulated over the years by commercial nuclear power plants in 35 states are stored in similar fashion at plants across the country.

That's because the federal government has not found a place for the waste to go.

Yucca Mountain in Nevada had been slated as a permanent waste site, but the Obama administration cut off funding for Yucca in 2010, after years of protests from lawmakers in the Silver State who had long opposed the project.

SONGS stopped producing electricity after a leak in a steam generator in 2012 led to the plant's closure and subsequent decommissioning efforts.

According to Edison's most recent figures regarding the dismantlement project, 54 of 66 structures at SONGS have been removed. Crews have shipped more than 750 million pounds of waste off-site and more than 3,200 rail cars have transported waste and materials off-site since demolition began.

As for the two distinctive containment domes that stand out prominently and have become a landmark for drivers on Interstate 5, exterior demolition is expected to begin in the early part of next year, starting with Unit 3 to the south.

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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Officials push to remove nuclear waste from San Onofre as sea levels rise

As rising sea levels and coastal erosion threaten the Southern California shoreline, local and federal leaders are pushing for a permanent plan to move spent nuclear fuel off the coast at the shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station.

The Brief

- Federal and local officials are stepping up efforts to permanently relocate spent nuclear fuel from the shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station amid growing concerns over coastal erosion and rising sea levels.
- Demolition of the plant's iconic beachfront containment domes is set to begin in the coming months and could be completed by late 2027, with overall decommissioning slated to wrap by the end of 2028.
- Southern California Edison maintains the on-site waste canisters are engineered to withstand extreme natural hazards, while officials point to specialized railcars and five states exploring host agreements as key steps toward permanent off-site removal.

LOS ANGELES - More than a decade after the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station shut down, federal leaders are ramping up efforts to try to find a permanent home for the facility's spent nuclear fuel.

A new report from U.S. Rep. Mike Levin's office about the shuttered plant highlights federal funding, demolition progress and potential pathways to finding a site for permanent relocation.
Officials emphasize that removing nuclear waste from the Southern California coastline is a priority amid rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

What we know:

For decades, the iconic containment domes just south of San Clemente served as familiar coastal landmarks. However, those structures could be completely demolished by the end of 2027 as the plant's decommissioning nears the finish line, officials said Wednesday.

"In the coming months, crews are going to begin taking down the containment domes behind us," said U.S. Rep. Mike Levin (CA-49).

"There's no immediate danger to the community, but this site was never designed to hold spent nuclear fuel indefinitely," Rep. Levin later said during a press conference Wednesday at the site.

Overcoming logistics and climate threats

Another motivating factor in the push to clear the site is the ongoing threat posed by Mother Nature. Recent winter storms, high tides, and aggressive coastal erosion are increasingly eating away at the Southern California coastline.

Steve Powell, President and CEO of Southern California Edison, noted that the plant was built with environmental hazards in mind.

"We understood the hazards that would exist, whether those are earthquakes, sea-level rising, tsunamis, and all those things," Powell said.

He assured the public that the canisters of the spent nuclear fuel are engineered to withstand extreme conditions into the future. Even so, officials agree that permanent removal is the ultimate goal.

Federal officials point to encouraging recent developments

In July, the US Department of Energy announced five states as potential hosts for Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses. The DOE says the proposed campuses are "designed to support activities across the full nuclear fuel lifecycle, including fuel fabrication, enrichment, reprocessing used nuclear fuel, and final disposition of used nuclear fuel."
On Wednesday, Rep. Levin highlighted a possibility for safely transporting the spent nuclear fuel when the time comes.

"We now have something called the Atlas railcar system, that's the first of its kind built to safely move spent fuel through existing commercial rail lines."

Federal leaders estimate that major decommissioning work across the San Onofre site is expected to be completed by the end of 2028.

The Source: Information for this story came from a press conference held by Rep. Mike Levin. Statements also came from Steve Powell, President and CEO of Southern California Edison, and the US Department of Energy.

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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4. For Awareness: San Clemente Times Article by Victor Cabral re: Progress Moving Spent Nuclear Fuel Out of San Clemente

From: Lorraine Quinn Sandstrom
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 2:26 PM
To: Daniel T. Stetson; Victor Cabral; Martha McNicholas; Michelle Anderson; Mike Balsamo; Garry Brown; Jim Desmond; Katrina Foley; Rob Howard; Scott Kibbey; Val Macedo; Lisa Davis; Ted Quinn; John Taylor; Mel Vernon; Michael Villar; Dan Whitley; Kelvin Barrios; Alyssa Napuri; Mark Enmeier; Hunter McDonald; Matthew Pagano
Cc: Manuel Camargo
Subject: For Awareness: San Clemente Times Article by Victor Cabral re: Progress Moving Spent Nuclear Fuel Out of San Clemente

Hello CEP Members,

I write to share a recent article by San Clemente City Council Member and CEP Vice Chair, Victor Cabral in the San Clemente Times regarding the progress being made towards moving the spent nuclear fuel out of San Clemente.

SC Times
LOCAL NEWS YOU CAN USE
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Progress Moving Spent Nuclear Fuel Out of San Clemente

October 7, 2026

For more than a decade, the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) has been shut down, but one challenge remains unresolved: what to do with the spent nuclear fuel still stored at the site.

As vice chair of the San Onofre Community Engagement Panel, I have watched our community confront the reality that decommissioning a nuclear plant is not simply

about dismantling buildings. It also requires managing spent fuel that was never intended to remain indefinitely on our coastline.

San Onofre permanently retired Units 2 and 3 in 2013. Since then, major progress has been made dismantling the plant and safely storing its spent fuel in dry canisters under federal oversight. But the federal government has yet to provide the permanent off-site solution envisioned decades ago. Communities like ours should not be required to serve as long-term storage sites by default.

That is why recent developments are encouraging.

In July, the U.S. Department of Energy announced that five states — Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Idaho — had signed agreements to explore hosting Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses. These campuses could ultimately include facilities for storing or disposing of spent nuclear fuel, including fuel from decommissioned plants such as San Onofre.

This does not mean the fuel will move tomorrow. Significant work remains, including federal authorization, regulatory review, transportation planning, community engagement and, most importantly, securing the consent of potential host communities.

Still, this represents something we have not seen in many years: states voluntarily stepping forward to explore solutions.

Our responsibility on the Community Engagement Panel is to keep the public informed, ask difficult questions and advocate for a safe, responsible path forward. Southern California deserves a solution that protects our coastline while treating host communities with the same respect we expect for our own.

For the first time in years, that solution appears closer.

Victor Cabral was elected to the San Clemente City Council in 2022 and appointed mayor in 2024. He is running for the elected position of mayor this fall. **SC**

Best Regards,
Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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A view of decommissioning work around San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station reactor containment domes in San Clemente on Aug. 21. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

By Blanca Begert / Staff Writer Photography by **Allen J. Schaben**

Sept. 12, 2026 3 AM PT

- Storm-driven erosion exposes vulnerability of California coast, reviving questions about keeping 3.6 million pounds of radioactive waste just 100 feet from the Pacific at decommissioned San Onofre nuclear power plant.
- Utility officials say seawalls and a steel canister storage system can withstand tsunamis, quakes and rising seas for decades, even as scientists warn of hazards of storing nuclear waste indefinitely in a seismically active area next to the ocean.
- With Yucca Mountain effectively canceled, federal officials promote new 'campus' storage sites in Utah and other states, promising jobs and consent-based siting while communities debate becoming America's long-term nuclear waste repository.

As parts of the Southern California coastline crumbled into the sea, slammed by intense waves and flooding in recent days, oceanographer Kim McCoy had one thing

on his mind: the nuclear waste set in concrete on the beach near San Clemente at the shuttered San Onofre nuclear power plant.

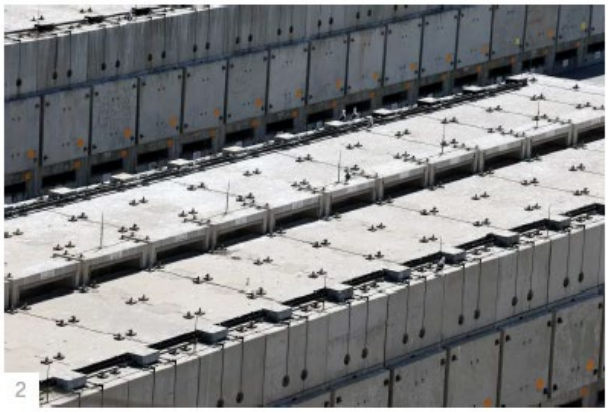
"Rising sea levels, storm waves, El Nino which increases wave height ... these could wash away a section of the walkway that protects the San Onofre seawall, and the waste canisters are just 100 feet away from that," the former wave dynamics researcher and longtime advocate against beach storage of nuclear waste said.

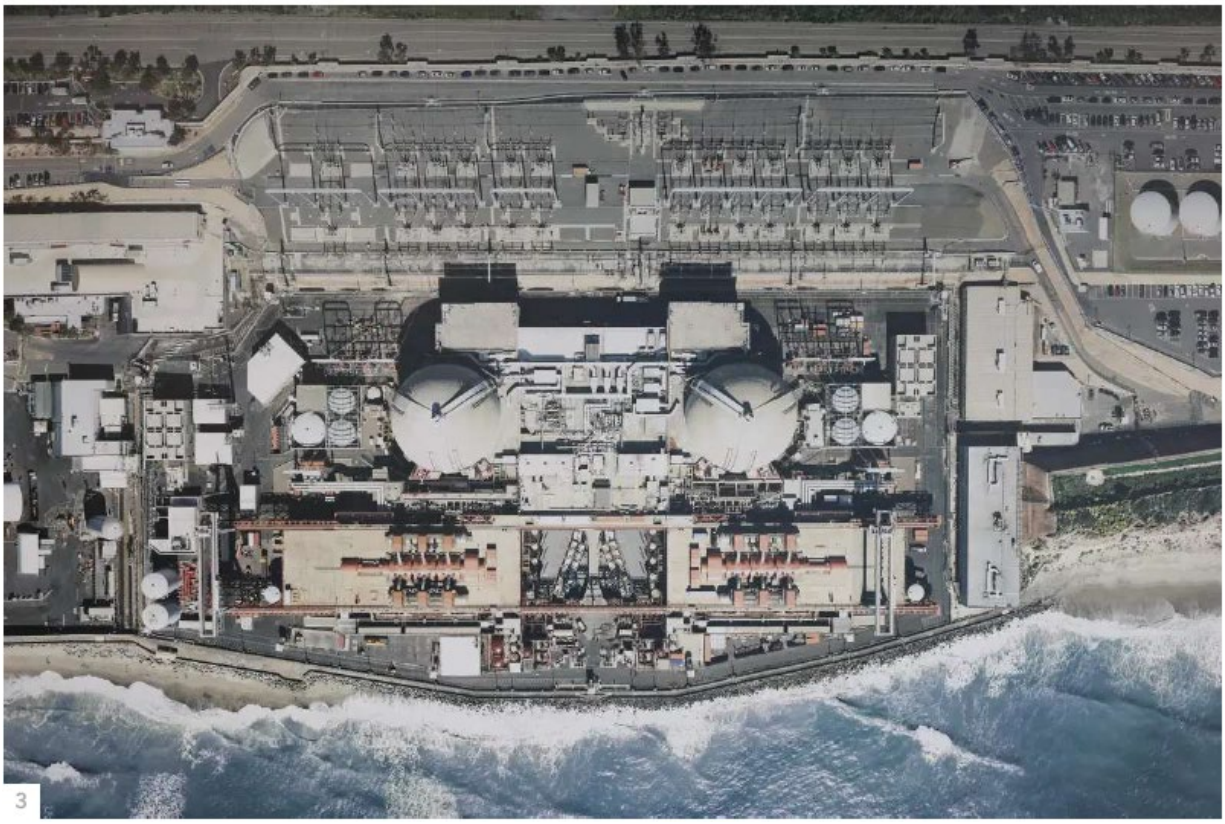
Most experts agree the risk of erosion damaging the nuclear waste storage system is extremely low in the near term. The plant's owner, Southern California Edison, has promised the California Coastal Commission to move the waste to higher elevation on-site if modeling shows sea level rise and erosion will start to pose a challenge.

But the recent waves, fueled by Hurricane Marie far away in the Pacific, resurfaced the issue of the ultimate fate of the highly radioactive spent fuel that used to power the reactors.

"At the moment, it is under control, I think it's essential to say that," said James Day, a geology professor at UC San Diego. "But geologically we must be thinking long term. The waste lasts for hundreds, if not thousands of generations."







1. Rows of round concrete vaults, each holding a canister of used nuclear fuel, sit underground at the Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation at the former San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. 2. Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI) where dry cask storage of used nuclear fuel is stored horizontally at the decommissioning San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. 3. A photograph above the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station hangs on the wall of a conference room at the facility.

Seen from Interstate 5, the twin domes of San Onofre look like they're part of an operating facility. Red lights flash at the top of each sphere, visible from afar,

among the chaparral and military buildings of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

But go behind the security checkpoint and you see a demolition site. Trailers and tents now sit where acres of office buildings, steam turbines, diesel generators, control rooms, cooling pools and water treatment plants have been knocked down and hauled away, since a scandal involving faulty steam generators shut down the plant in 2013.

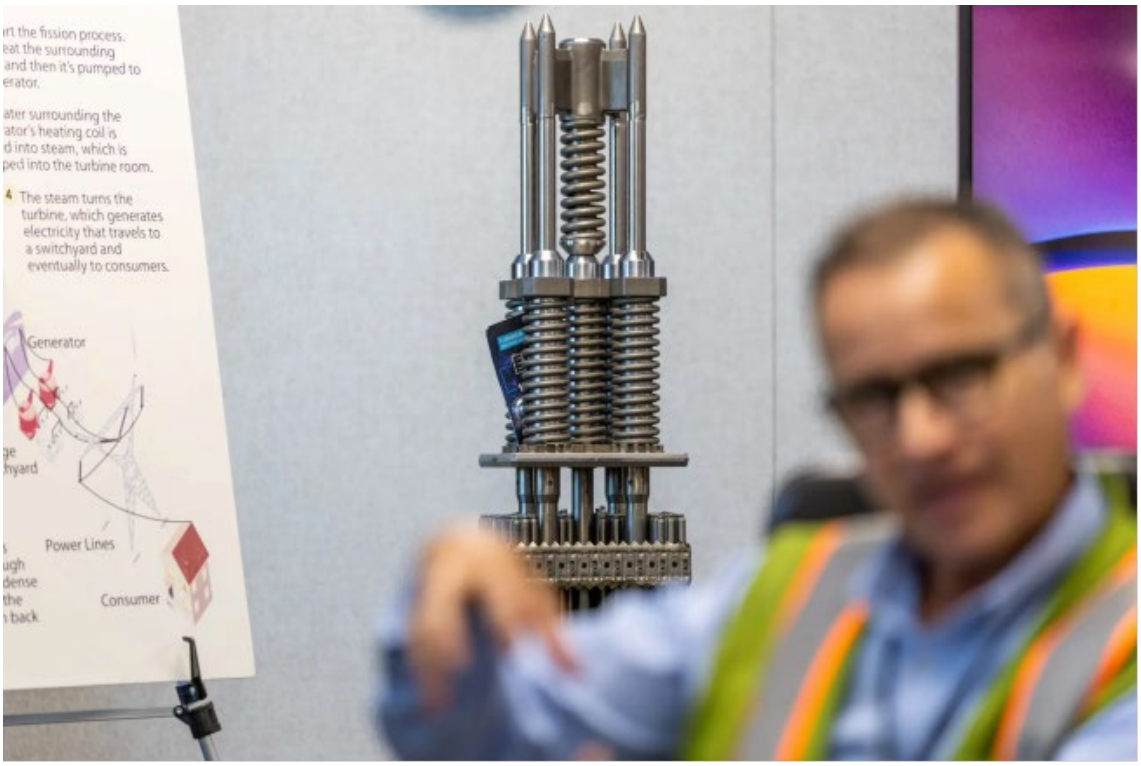
Most of the rubble, which is only mildly radioactive or not at all, has already been sent to sites in Utah, Texas and Arizona.

The distinctive twin domes that once housed the reactor cores will start coming down early next year. But the 3.6 million pounds of high-level waste will stay in the coastal community indefinitely.

How much of a safety hazard that is depends on whom you ask.

"San Onofre is sitting on some fairly young rocks in a seismically active region," Day said at a recent symposium at the Scripps Seaside Forum in La Jolla, hosted by the Samuel Lawrence Foundation. "This is not the sort of place you would leave nuclear waste."

Others noted that collapse of beach slopes could make the site more vulnerable to tsunamis. They spoke of the corrosive effects of the ocean air on the steel canisters that hold the waste.



Manuel Camargo, principal manager, strategic planning, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, talks about nuclear waste storage with a model of a nuclear fuel assembly in the background on Aug. 21 in San Clemente. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

"They could be doing more monitoring," Greg Jaczko, former head of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said of Edison. The utility tracks air temperature and radioactivity, checks canisters for cracks on the outside and inspects test canisters that mimic the active waste ones for signs of degradation.

Edison says its system will be safe for decades to come.

"The maximum credible tsunami here would not even overtake the seawall," said Manuel Camargo, principal manager of decommissioning for Edison, standing on the concrete pad that holds the steel waste storage canisters. "The maximum credible earthquake, somewhere around a 7.0 magnitude, would produce something about half of what this system is designed to withstand."

As he spoke, just in front of the plant, surfers were catching waves. He pointed out where Edison is bolstering a path below the seawall. Based on state data from the California Ocean Protection Council, the seawall would not be inundated before 2050, Camargo said. "It's an extremely robust system."



Rows of round concrete vaults, each holding a canister of used nuclear fuel. The system, built into the bluff above the Pacific Ocean, holds dozens of canisters of radioactive waste and is designed to withstand fire, flood and tsunami.

Yet despite confidence in its protective measures, even the utility wants the waste out of there as soon as possible. Because this status quo is expensive. From 1982 through 2014, Edison customers, like many ratepayers around the country, paid into a federal fund for a promised permanent nuclear waste

storage site. But plans for a deep geological repository beneath Yucca Mountain in Nevada crumbled in the face of local opposition in 2011.

Utilities around the U.S. now sue the federal government every year to recoup their storage expenses because the Department of Energy has not come through on its promise. The lawsuits cost taxpayers $2 million a day, according to Camargo.

"It's so safe that it's almost a problem," Camargo said. "It's not a priority to a lot of folks to move it."







1. A caution: radioactive material sign is posted as Kevin Sheek, senior advisor for Emergency Planning, San Onofre

Nuclear Generating Station, gives a tour of the Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation (ISFSI) . 2. An estimated 5,000 rail cars wait to be loaded to haul away dismantled plant materials. 3. The plant is located on an 84-acre site on the Pacific coast within the boundaries of the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in San Diego County.

Camargo, like so many in the nuclear power industry, is hanging his hopes on a new idea. The Trump administration's Department of Energy wants to create "campuses" in several states to store waste and, in exchange, give local jurisdictions funding to develop different aspects of the nuclear cycle - such as fuel creation, power generation and potentially fuel recycling.

The administration wants to address the fact that waste is sitting at 80 reactor sites around the country. It also needs places for waste from new reactors it wants to build. Several states including California have bans on new nuclear power until there is permanent federal storage. Some state leaders are trying to make an exception for small modular reactors such as the one the Port of Long Beach wants to build on a floating barge offshore.

For the record:

4:45 p.m. Sept. 12, 2026 *A previous version of this article listed Indiana as one of the five potential states to host nuclear waste campuses. The fifth state is Louisiana.*

The Energy Department announced in July that it had signed memorandums of understanding with Utah, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Idaho and Louisiana to explore their potential as campus hosts. U.S. Reps. Scott Peters (D-San Diego) and Mike

Levin (D-San Juan Capistrano), whose district includes San Onofre, support this idea, and Camargo said Edison was in discussions with Utah and Tennessee about how it can help.

Other efforts to create nuclear waste storage facilities since Yucca Mountain have floundered. But boosters of the campus idea say this will be different, because the plan draws on principles of "consent-based siting" developed under the Obama administration and offers money and jobs.

"The community engagement piece has been central to our entire strategy, and we're giving the community these options and funding to win," said Tim Kowalchik, research director at Utah's Office of Energy Development.

Others in Utah disagree, indicating it could be a long road to community buy-in.

"What we're seeing still is very limited community engagement and transparency about these proposed plans," said Carmen Valdez, radioactive program manager with the nonprofit Heal Utah. "Our communities have always said no to becoming a waste site. We don't want to be the toilet bowl of the nation."



Kevin Sheek points to decommissioning work around reactor containment domes during a tour of the nuclear waste storage facility. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

Finland is the country furthest along in building a deep, permanent geological storage for nuclear fuel. It will soon place canisters thousands of feet underground in stable rock formations and seal them off. Sweden has also broken ground on a facility, and Switzerland and Canada have chosen sites. Camacho and lawmakers are optimistic that the U.S. can create something similar and remove the waste from San Onfre in 10 to 15 years. If not, in 2103, when the site's

earliest canisters' approach their intended 100-year lifespans, the utility may have to start transferring the fuel into new ones.

Best Regards,

Lorraine Sandstrom
Community Affairs and Relations, Senior Specialist
Community Engagement Panel (CEP) Management and Stakeholder Engagement (DA Complex B)
Southern California Edison, San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS)

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