CA Prepares for Another Summer without Nuke Plant

FOLSOM, Calif. (AP) — The agency that operates California's power grid said Thursday it is preparing for another summer without power generated by the shuttered San Onofre nuclear power plant.

The move confirms what regulators have told a U.S. Senate committee about the facility, which has been shut since January: it's unlikely the facility will be operational any time soon.

Earlier this week, Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairwoman Allison Macfarlane told the committee that Southern California Edison is planning to submit plans to restart any reactors the first week of October, and the approval process for those plans could be lengthy.

The California Independent System Operator's board of governors on Thursday approved a recommendation by experts to convert two power units in Huntington Beach into condensers that provide voltage support typically provided by the San Onofre plant.

The San Onofre plant has been closed since January because of a tube leak in that unit 3 reactor that caused the release of traces of radiation, leading to the discovery that hundreds of tubes carrying radioactive water were showing excessive wear.

Two mothballed generators at the Huntington Beach power plant were brought back online to provide 442 megawatts of energy and support to allow power to be imported from the San Diego area.

The Huntington Beach generators are currently producing power and will be taken offline by the end of October, and can be converted thereafter.

The San Onofre plant, located between Los Angeles and San Diego, is co-owned by San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison. The plant serves southern Orange and San Diego counties. Edison cut 730 jobs at the plant last month.

A three-month federal probe blamed a botched computer analysis for generator design flaws that ultimately resulted in heavy wear to the alloy tubing.

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