Calif. Utility to Retire San Onofre Nuclear Plant

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — The troubled San Onofre nuclear power plant in Southern California is closing, after an epic 16-month battle over whether the twin reactors could be safely returned to service, officials announced Friday.

Operator Southern California Edison said in a statement it will retire the twin reactors because uncertainty about the future of the plant, which was facing a tangle of regulatory hurdles and investigations.

The plant "has served this region for over 40 years," Ted Craver, chairman of SCE parent Edison International said in a statement. "But we have concluded that the continuing uncertainty about when or if (the plant) might return to service was not good for our customers, our investors, or the need to plan for our region's long-term electricity needs."

The plant between San Diego and Los Angeles hasn't produced electricity since January 2012, after a small radiation leak led to the discovery of unusual damage to hundreds of tubes that carry radioactive water.

SCE had been seeking permission from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to restart the Unit 2 reactor and run it at reduced power, in hopes of stopping vibration that had damaged tubing.

About 7.4 million Californians live within 50 miles of San Onofre, which can power 1.4 million homes. California officials have said they would be able to make it through the summer without the plant but warned that wildfires or another disruption in distribution could cause power shortages.

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