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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.

For more information about San Onofre, visit songscommunity.com and follow us on Twitter ([@SCE_SONGS](https://twitter.com/SCE_SONGS)) and Facebook ([@SONGScommunitypage](https://www.facebook.com/SONGScommunitypage)).

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