

San Onofre Nuclear Waste Facts & Statistics

San Onofre Nuclear Waste Site

- **Location:** San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS), San Clemente, CA
- **Reactor Status:** Shutdown in 2013; decommissioning underway
- **Waste Inventory:** ~3.6 million pounds of highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel
- **Storage:** 123 Holtec HI-STORM UMAX dry-storage canisters, 5/8-inch stainless steel, prone to corrosion
- **Hazard Duration:** Waste remains dangerous for hundreds of thousands of years
- **Proximity to Ocean:** ~100 feet from Pacific shoreline

Storage Risks

- Earthquake and tsunami zone; active faults nearby (Rose Canyon, Newport-Inglewood)
- Coastal erosion and sea level rise threaten storage pad stability
- Chloride-induced stress corrosion cracking possible within ~17 years
- Canisters cannot be internally inspected or repaired
- Each canister contains roughly the same Cesium-137 as released in Chernobyl

Regulatory & Policy Context

- DOE legally obligated to remove spent fuel since 1998 (Nuclear Waste Policy Act)
- Yucca Mountain repository canceled in 2010; no replacement in place
- Nationwide issue: 80+ sites across 35 states store spent fuel in temporary facilities
- Federal liability: \$10B+ paid in settlements and court judgments; ~\$500M accrues annually

Environmental Justice Implications

- 9 million people live within 50 miles of SONGS
- Diverse populations: Latino, military, low-income communities
- Reflects “nuclear colonialism” pattern: marginalized communities disproportionately bear environmental and health risks
- Potential long-term exposure risk if canisters fail



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Sources

- *U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)*
- *U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)*
- *California Coastal Commission*
- *Nuclear Waste Policy Act*
- *Scientific research on spent fuel storage & corrosion*
- *Investigative reporting: The Guardian, Washington Post, LA Times*

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Experts available on nuclear waste policy, environmental justice, and community impacts