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Self-serving argument...

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Loss Of Nuclear Is Bringing 'Unprecedented Tumult' For US Grid, Says NEI

30 Mar 2018 : The US electricity grid is enduring "unprecedented tumult and challenge" because of the loss of thousands and thousands of megawatts of carbon-free, fuel-secure generation that nuclear plants represent, Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) president and chief executive officer Maria Korsnick said.

Responding to the announcement on 28 March 2018 that Ohio-based FirstEnergy plans to close four nuclear reactor units at its Perry, Davis-Besse and Beaver Valley nuclear stations, Ms Korsnick said losing these plants will imperil the resilience of the grid. She warned that closing nuclear plants makes electricity prices go up and is putting emissions reduction targets hopelessly out of reach.

Over the past five years, 18 nuclear reactors at 14 sites across the US have either closed or their premature closings have been announced, the NEI said.

On Wednesday, FirstEnergy said it would shut its nuclear plants in Ohio and Pennsylvania in the next three years without some kind of state or federal relief.

With a total generating capacity of more than 4,000 MW, the four reactors at three sites provide jobs

for about 2,300 people and generate more than \$540m in local taxes, the NEI said. “The plant closures would occur in 2020 and 2021, but the damage will be felt for decades.”

The day after the potential closures were announced, FirstEnergy Solutions, citing a serious threat to the stability of the electric grid, called on energy secretary Rick Perry to use emergency powers to order PJM Interconnection, the regional power grid operator, to negotiate a contract that would compensate owners of nuclear and coal plants for the benefits such as reliability and jobs those units provide.

The threat, FES said, is caused by the premature retirement of plants that have many years of useful life but cannot operate profitably under current market conditions. The retirement of such plants is accelerating, the company said.

“PJM has demonstrated little urgency to remedy this problem any time soon – so immediate action is needed to alleviate the present emergency,” FES president Donald Schneider said.

US coal and nuclear power plant operators have struggled in recent years because of low natural gas prices as a result of the shale boom. Last year, Mr Perry proposed a plan that would subsidise coal and nuclear for providing around-the-clock baseload generation.

US regulators rejected that proposal in January and said they would instead ask for a study on issues that might affect grid resilience, typically defined as the ability of the grid to withstand changes or disruptive events.

Mr Perry, supported by the nuclear industry, had called for market reforms to recognise the ability of traditional baseload generation with onsite fuel supplies – including nuclear power plants – to provide grid resiliency during extreme events like hurricanes or extreme winter weather.



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