Formed SCANA exec pleads guilty in Summer fraud case

Stephen A. Byrne, former executive vice president of SCANA Corporation, pleaded guilty in federal court on July 23 to conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud in connection with the failed $9 billion nuclear-expansion project at South Carolina’s Summerville plant.

Byrne, 60, had also been president of generation and transmission and chief operating officer at SCANA subsidiary South Carolina Electric & Gas, overseeing all of SCANA’s nuclear operations, including the construction of the new nuclear units on which work was stopped in 2017 (NN, Aug. 2017, p. 17).

The plea agreement—the result of a multiyear joint investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division—requires Byrne to cooperate with law enforcement officials. It also includes an agreement with Virginia-based Dominion Energy that will provide it at least $4 billion for startup relief. SCANA became a wholly owned subsidiary of Dominion in July 2016 (NN, July-Aug. 2016, p. 15).

Contrary to his public statements, Byrne was aware in June 2016 that the Summer project’s construction schedule and completion dates were unrealistic, and unlikely to be achieved, and that both units of the project, Summer-2 and -3, were unlikely to be finished in time to qualify for federal nuclear production tax credits, according to the Department of Justice. His false and misleading statements contributed to SCANA’s success in obtaining rate increases to finance the project, the DOJ said.

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