

JNFL Signs Safety Agreement with Six More Municipalities

On December 3, in Misawa City (Aomori Pref.), the Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. (JNFL) concluded safety agreements with six municipalities adjacent to Rokkasho-mura: Misawa City, as well as Noheji, Kamikita, Tohoku and Yokohama Towns, and Higashidori Village. The agreements dealt with uranium testing at the spent fuel reprocessing plant that JNFL is constructing in Rokkasho. That brings an end to all the talks with the local communities prior to the testing.

Later that afternoon, JNFL submitted a plan to Aomori Prefecture, Rokkasho-mura and the six municipalities to transport depleted uranium fuel to the plant for use in the testing. The fuel is currently stored at three nuclear-fuel fabrication plants around Japan: the Mitsubishi Nuclear Fuel Co's plant in Tokai Village (Ibaraki Pref.), the Global Nuclear Fuel-Japan Co's plant in Yokosuka City (Kanagawa Pref.), and the Nuclear Fuel Industries, Ltd.'s plant in Kumatori Town (Osaka Pref.). Of that amount, 53 tons will be delivered to the reprocessing plant in several installments.

Now that JNFL has presented its transport plan to the municipalities, the delivery of fuel is expected to start on or after December 17. The uranium testing will officially commence with the transfer of the fuel from temporary storage in the reprocessing plant to the place where it will be dissolved.

The uranium testing is thus expected to almost certainly start by the end of the month. Indeed, at a press conference after the signing, JNFL President Isami Kojima said, "We think the testing will likely begin before the end of the year. We want to do that as soon as possible."

Also at the press conference, Misawa Mayor Shigeyoshi Suzuki, who had championed the agreement among his counterparts, said, "Unless the government, the prefecture and the company consider measures for such unforeseen situations as terrorist attacks, the citizens will increasingly feel a sense of unease. I want all the parties to keep that in mind while doing everything necessary to help everyone feel secure in all respects."

Previously, on November 22, Aomori Prefecture and Rokkasho-mura had concluded their own safety agreements with JNFL regarding the uranium testing. On December 2, the six municipalities conveyed their intention to sign similar agreements, to which JNFL responded affirmatively.



Misawa Mayor Suzuki (left) and JNFL Pres. Kojima at the signing ceremony

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