

## **METI Minister Explains Aging Reactor Measures to Fukui Governor**

**In connection with the fatal accident that occurred at the Mihama-3 NPS of the Kansai Electric Power Co. in August 2004, Minister Shoichi Nakagawa of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) visited Gov. Issei Nishikawa of Fukui Prefecture on December 25. At the meeting, Nakagawa pledged that the national government would “do its utmost” to reinforce anti-aging measures at nuclear power plants (NPPs) – something that the prefecture has been requesting.**

METI's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) has already established an office to supervise aging reactors. That office has begun to respond to requests being made by the prefecture, including holding the first meeting of a committee to debate countermeasures to reactor aging. Nakagawa's visit to the Fukui Prefectural Office, in his capacity as the cabinet minister in charge of the issue, aimed to give Gov. Nishikawa a direct explanation of the national government's efforts to rectify the situation. He apologized to the governor, saying, “The national government feels a sense of responsibility for letting such an accident happen.”

In order to supervise the safety inspectors at the prefecture's NPPs, Gov. Nishikawa was told that an office of the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organization (JNES) – an independent incorporated administrative agency – would be set up in Fukui Prefecture, with a manager of the department-chief level posted there. Furthermore, Nakagawa clarified that top METI officials would participate in a committee to draw up plans for such things as training and educating nuclear power-related personnel, as well as transferring technology

In response to Minister Nakagawa's explanations, Gov. Nishikawa said, “I appreciate your earnest cooperation. I believe we have moved one step forward.”

*Editor: Noriyuki Ishii, JAIF*