

Chubu Electric Power Holds Public Meeting on MOX-Use Program

Intending to load MOX fuel at its Hamaoka-4 NPS (BWR, 1,137MW), the Chubu Electric Power Co. held a public meeting on November 19 in Omaezaki City (Shizuoka Pref.) to discuss its MOX-use program. The approximately 530 people in attendance listened to an explanation of the program's details, and then heard a panel discuss the necessity and relative merits of the program.

The meeting was divided into two parts: an explanation of the MOX-use Program followed by a panel discussion. At the beginning of the meeting, Tetsuo Noguchi, director for nuclear energy promotion at the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy (ANRE), spoke about Japan's current energy situation and the need for the MOX-use program. Senior Managing Director Koichi Ikeda of Chubu Electric then explained the program at Hamaoka-4 in detail, responding to a variety of questions the company had received, including such things as the action of control rods, the nature of the MOX fuel, the disposal of spent MOX fuel, economic efficiency, and the effect of an expected earthquake in the Tokai region on the plant.



In the panel discussion, six people representing the local community and four specialists and experts discussed safety, seismic measures, economic efficiency, safety agreements and information disclosure, offering a diversity of opinions. While some of the panelists called for the program to be cancelled, or more prudent actions to be taken out of a concern about safety, others supported the program's implementation, premised on safety, in consideration of Japan's current energy situation.

The audience was keenly interested in the effects that an earthquake in the Tokai region – deemed likely – would have, both on the plant and on the safety of nuclear power in general, including the MOX-use program. Some people called for earthquake specialists and seismologists to publicly discuss those matters in an easy-to-understand manner. Chubu Electric representatives explained seismic safety, saying an earthquake of magnitude 8.5 on the Richter scale ($S_2 = 600$ gal ground acceleration) was assumed, and that work was being carried out to improve seismic tolerance to a level of about 1,000 gals. It said, however, that the MOX-use program had nothing to do with seismic stability.

In response to a request that a preliminary consent provision be included in safety agreements with local municipalities, however, Chubu Electric demurred, saying, "We have always carried out our activities obtaining consent from local communities based on a relationship of trust, even without such a provision. We are thus not thinking of proposing a review of the agreement under the current circumstances."

At a press conference after the meeting, Vice-president Takahiko Ito made the following statement about the company's application for permission to change a reactor installation in order to load the MOX fuel: "We expect to submit the application by the end of this year, or maybe by the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 2006). We will make that decision in light of the

state of understanding obtained from the local community, rather than on an assumed schedule per se.”

Chubu Electric will strive further to explain the nature and safety of the program, and to obtain the understanding of the people. Its efforts will include continued house-to-house visits in local and neighboring municipalities, and gatherings held for smaller groups and localities.

Editor: Noriyuki Ishii, JAIF