

NISA Lifts Administrative Suspension of Mihama-3

On December 5, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) carried out its second on-site inspection at Mihama-3 NPS (PWR, 826MW), operated by the Kansai Electric Power Co., and confirmed that the piping replaced near the site of an earlier accident complies with technical standards under the Electric Utility Industry Law. NISA then lifted its administrative imposition of the temporary suspension that it had issued in September 2004 on the use of the unit.

The first on-site inspection at Mihama-3 took place last month, on November 10 and 11. At that time, NISA discovered during its cross-checking that significant differences existed in some of the measured figures related to wall thicknesses of piping. Directed by the Agency to redo the measurements, the power company duly did so and reported the updated results on December 1. The differences in the measurements had been due to ambiguities and/or inconsistencies in the physical measurement points, so Kansai Electric Power designated specific positions the second time around and took the measurements accordingly.

The on-site inspection on December 5 followed the aforementioned report from the company. NISA confirmed that the thickness met the requirements, and thus lifted the administrative suspension. The Agency then said that, in the future, it would use special safety inspections and other means to check the points needing improvement (those which had been pointed out in its first on-site inspection): namely, those related to the confirmation of the appropriateness of the piping replacement work. In addition, NISA will check the certainty of implementation of wall-thinning management in the secondary piping system.

Upon the lifting of the suspension, Kansai Electric Power released a comment on December 5 saying that it "would continue its activities, placing priority on securing safety and gaining confidence from the people." Mihama-3 will continue its periodic inspection as scheduled, after which it will undergo a pre-service inspection. The company will then consider when it would be appropriate to conduct talks with local municipalities.

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