

JAEA Develops Notification System to Summon Staff in Disasters

On August 25, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) started operations of its newly-developed JAEA Emergency Notification and Summoning System, by which designated staff members are alerted about large-scale disasters and emergencies and summoned to facilities. The system bypasses local telephone lines, expected to be jammed after the occurrence of such disasters, and instead takes advantage of the private communication network (internal lines) owned by JAEA to ensure that the staff members in question are warned reliably.

JAEA's facilities comprise various R&D bases, including the Tokai Research and Development Center in Ibaraki Prefecture, the Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR) Research and Development Center in Fukui Prefecture (where the Prototype FBR Monju is located), and the Kansai Photon Science Institute in Hyogo Prefecture, among others. Should an accident or trouble occur at any of those places, the staff responsible for dealing with the situation are summoned immediately to engage in recovery work and/or communications with related organizations. For that purpose, the staff members designated in advance for a particular type of emergency are sent messages, either to their fixed telephone lines at home or their mobile (cellular) phones, summoning them to appear.

However, in the event of a major earthquake or typhoon that causes havoc in the surrounding community, phone lines will likely become congested owing to worried calls by friends and relatives of residents trying to get word of their loved ones. To avoid the interruption in telephone service in such a case, a "disaster congestion" control system sets in, limiting the use of normal phone lines and giving precedence to so-called "disaster-priority phones." Because of that, the possibility arose that crucial JAEA personnel could not be summoned smoothly under the existing mechanism.

The system developed this time uses JAEA's private communication network to notify a remote R&D base (i.e., away from the emergency), from which NTT telephone lines are used to alert and summon personnel at the disaster area. Both telephone and e-mail are used in the system.

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