

Report Finalized on Waste from Research Institutes

On September 12, the 21st meeting was held of the working committee on nuclear R&D, under the Science Council of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The committee approved a final report entitled "Activities toward Implementing Disposal of Radioisotopes and Waste from Research Institutes, etc., (shallow underground disposal)," which had been issued by the committee's working group for the study of such disposal, after public comments had been taken into consideration.

The key points in the report are as follows: (1) the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) will promote the establishment of the disposal business in cooperation with the government, waste generators, the Japan Radioisotope Association (JRIA) and others; (2) the government will establish and implement a system to reserve the necessary funds for disposal; and (3) the regulatory authorities will address the rational handling of procedures, for example, to cope with the burden of so-called dual regulation. The working group had made the report available to the public for comments from July 28 through August 28.

A total of 96 comments were received, mostly related to the system under which the disposal business will be implemented, and the ensuring of funds. One said, "Not only JAEA, but also the government, should be responsible for the disposal." Another read, "The responsibility of the generators of waste needs to be clarified, once the waste has been delivered to the disposer." One comment went, "The government should be involved in R&D, and should bear the corresponding costs," while someone else said, "Tax measures will be necessary."

MEXT is requesting ¥4.7 billion in the upcoming FY2007 budget for the smooth implementation of the disposal, while debate continues about the establishment of a system to reserve the necessary funds.

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