

## Revised Seismic Design Guidelines Come into Force on September 19

On September 19, the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC) of Japan approved the proposal for revisions to the seismic design examination guidelines related to facilities with reactors for nuclear power generation, a subject that the NSC had long discussed. With the approval, the new guidelines became immediately effective.

Under the revision, the previous guidelines that had been in place since 1981 shifted their main focus to the sophistication of procedures developed for standard earthquake movements. In addition, the seismic safety guidelines for nuclear facilities other than nuclear power plants (NPPs) were also revised. Also, from the perspective of striving to improve safety based on the latest knowledge, NSC decided to have the seismic safety of existing nuclear power facilities reconfirmed as well, based on the guideline revisions.

NSC's investigatory deliberations for the revisions in the seismic design examination guidelines began in 2001 as indicated by what was then known as the NSC's Special Committee on Nuclear Power Safety Standards. In 2004, the subcommittee was renamed the Special Committee on Nuclear Power Safety Standards and Guides, upon which discussions by its subcommittees and working groups intensified. Although the initial proposal for the revised guidelines had been drawn up in May 2006, it was first released for public comment before being finalized. After receiving the opinions submitted by 700 people, The subcommittee discussed them, coming up with its final version of the proposed revisions on September 11.

At the provisional meeting of the NSC held on September 19, Prof. Genki Yagawa (chief of the Toyo University Computational Dynamics Center), chairman of NSC Special Committee, explained to the NSC the course of the committee's discussions on the public opinions received and other issues, then reported on the drawing up of the proposal for the revision of the safety examination guidelines related to seismic safety.

NSC then approved the revisions, saying that while "its chief purpose is for use in future safety inspections, etc.," it was also "significant from the perspective of public accountability, as it is conducive for the further improvement of seismic safety of Japan's nuclear facilities. Because of that, the opportunity provided by the revisions would lead to the confirmation of seismic safety of existing nuclear facilities in line with the provisions of the new guidelines, with regulatory authorities to call upon nuclear operators to make safety evaluations and report on the results. Also, as far as the quantitative evaluation of the residual risk is concerned, NSC representatives said, "It would be desirable to actively introduce evaluatory methods based on the latest knowledge, as represented by probabilistic safety evaluations.

While each electric power company is currently engaged in geological investigation to judge their existing NPP facilities' ability to reflect the revised guidelines, the Federation of Electric Power Companies (FEPC), upon learning of the decision to adopt the new guidelines, released a comment saying, "Voluntary measures will be implemented, as necessary, to improve the seismic capacity of the facilities."

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