

Ways Discussed to Support Efforts by Academic Societies to Draw Up Standards

On November 20, the second meeting was held of the working committee on nuclear safety infrastructure of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Subcommittee, part of the Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy, which falls under the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI). The working committee is chaired by Prof. Hirotada Ohashi of the University of Tokyo Graduate School. During the discussions, which revolved around the settings of specifications and standards, particularly by academic societies, participants strongly called for the need to set up a framework of support by related institutions, including the national government, for the standard-setting activities being primarily carried out now by those societies on a volunteer basis.

Explanations were given at the meeting about the current efforts by the Atomic Energy Society of Japan (AESJ), the Japan Society of Mechanical Engineering, and the Japan Electric Association to set specifications and standards, as well as a road map laid forth by AESJ for setting standards. The Federation of Electric Power Companies (FEPC) has listed 27 specifications requiring elucidation in the future, particularly guidelines for the application of risk information. It has also identified such major tasks as reinforcing the cooperative framework between academic societies, the national government, and industry, as well as fostering human resources to respond to the need for setting standards. In addition, Prof. Hideaki Shiroyama of the University of Tokyo Graduate School pointed out such issues as performance regulation, the application of standards in the private sector, the regulation of private-sector specifications, and the private-sector capacity to draw up such specifications.

At the meeting, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) presented its policies for the performance regulation of regulatory standards. As a concrete method toward their realization, it said it would enlist the active participation of academic societies, adding that it would encourage the activities by such societies for the drawing up of standards in the future as well.

The committee members raised various points during the meeting, including one person who said, "The activity of drawing up standards by academic societies is purely voluntary. While the regulation of performance may benefit the regulatory side, it increases the burden on those societies. It is thus necessary for the societies, along with the national government and industry, to create a framework to secure resources for the activity of drawing up standards." Someone else pointed out, "Priority ought to be given to the maintenance of impartiality by the academic societies," while another member said, "There seems to be a systemic predisposition not to properly appreciate the participation of private companies in the standards drawing-up process."

Editor: Noriyuki Ishii, JAIF