

All Possible Efforts To Be Made for Comprehensive Seismic Measures

On July 31, the first meeting was held of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Subcommittee's working committee on investigations and measures for nuclear facilities following the Niigata-Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake (the subcommittee being under the jurisdiction of the Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy). The mission of the working committee is to investigate the effects of the earthquake on the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS, based on which issues and actions of the government and companies will be addressed comprehensively. Representatives from Niigata Prefecture, Kashiwazaki City and Kariwa Village are included among the members of the working committee.

The working committee will specifically discuss the following matters: (1) the nuclear facility's own internal firefighting systems, and the transmission of information (including that to local communities) when earthquakes occur, (2) an evaluation of seismic safety based on the lessons of last month's earthquake, and (3) the state of reactor management and the soundness of equipment and facilities at the time the earthquake occurred and measures to be taken from now on. The first is to be handled through a working group on firefighting and information communication, the second through a working committee on seismic and structural design, and the third through a working group on the management and evaluation of equipment and facility soundness.

In his opening address to the working committee, Minister Akira Amari of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) said that the fact that ground acceleration beyond the assumed design value had been recorded at the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS was "a major element upsetting people's feeling of reliance on nuclear power." He added that he expected the deliberations of the working committee to lead to improvements in nuclear safety that would, in turn, help recover the public's feelings of safety and their understanding of nuclear energy.

As it launched the deliberations of the working committee, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) explained the state of damage from the earthquake and the progress of recovery work and actions taken by the government (both of which had also been explained through press kits and by the Nuclear Safety Commission in the two weeks following the earthquake), as well as internal fire-fighting systems (as explained to it by each power utility), the measures to improve reporting on accidents, and data on the earthquake recorded at the NPS.

Describing the real extent of damage being caused by fear and rumors, Mayor Hiroo Shinada of Kariwa Village lamented, "Seaside schools (summertime events held by public schools for upper-level elementary school students) have been canceled one after another. That is just plain ridiculous, of course. But it illustrates how unequipped people are to make proper judgments when it comes to nuclear power." He stressed the need to promptly provide proper information.

Next, Deputy Mayor Masaki Wakayama of Kashiwazaki City commented on the multiplicity of views concerning active faults around the plant site, saying, "The issue has been



Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS

argued locally over many years. Even specialists are divided, and that leaves us unable to be sure of anything." He strongly urged the government to carry out thorough investigations.

Meanwhile, on behalf of the governor of Niigata, a crisis management official for the prefecture, Eiji Saida, called for the application of the Law on Compensation for Nuclear Damage to the damage being caused by fear and rumors in the wake of the latest earthquake. He also asked the national government for a fundamental revision of the new Examination Guide for the Seismic Design of Nuclear Power Reactor Facilities, and for the revision of the Special Law on Emergency Preparedness for Nuclear Disasters, taking into account differences in the chains of command and authority during emergencies, so that the law could be applied not just during the extensive release of radioactivity, but also for the damage suffered by a nuclear facility when a major natural disaster occurs.

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