

IAEA Investigatory Team Arrives at Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS

On August 5, an investigatory team from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) arrived in Japan, in order to study the impact of the July 16 Niigata-Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake on the Kashiwazaki Kariwa Nuclear Power Station (NPS). It began to make an on-site inspection and conduct hearings, mainly from the viewpoint of anti-seismic matters. Their activities were to last until August 10, by which time they would get a good grasp of the events, from which they would extract findings that would be reflected in a report to be presented by the IAEA.

On July 20, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) had approved a request from the IAEA to make an inspection of the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS after the earthquake, and specific arrangements were then made. Meanwhile, on July 23, Governor Hirohiko Izumida of Niigata Prefecture held an extraordinary press conference, at which he said, "We have to accurately transmit what is happening as seen from the eyes of the world," thus stressing the significance of the investigation by the international organization.

In 2004, the IAEA sent its Operational Safety Review Team (OSART), with its extensive experience of conducting safety reviews at more than 100 sites, to the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS, where it then proceeded to make such a review over a three-week period. In its report, OSART gave an overall satisfactory rating to the plant, saying, "There are extremely passionate and determined efforts being made to improve the plant's operational safety." At the same time, though, it pointed out several areas in which improvement was recommended, such as in fire-prevention organization and training, as well as the reinforced management of inflammable materials and fire doors.

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