

Government May Gain Power to Propose Investigations for HLW Disposal Facility Siting

On September 12, the working committee on radioactive waste under the Nuclear Power Subcommittee (itself under the jurisdiction of the Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy, part of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)) issued a proposal to boost activities to promote the final radwaste disposal project. In response to calls for the government to come more to the forefront in the matter, the proposal includes language to the effect that the national government should be able to “propose an investigation based on documents and records” of any area showing an interest in siting.

The purpose behind enabling the government to propose an investigation based on documents and records of any municipality interested in siting a final disposal facility is to encourage such municipalities to apply for such investigations. Previously, whenever a municipality initiated concrete actions toward making an application, demands were directed to its political head and/or local assembly to explain the need for siting the disposal business and respond about various technological and scientific issues regarding safety – all of which have placed great burdens on those local officials. Several municipalities have shown interest in such investigations, and some of them – for that reason – have asked for the proposal to be made by the government.

The Agency for Natural Resources and Energy (ANRE) said that the government would not ask for an investigation of any municipality that had not itself indicated an interest in siting. As previously, based on the current public-application system, the government will propose an investigation from the viewpoint that the government will be accountable, while respecting the intentions of the municipality.

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