

Recovery Work at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa NPS Moves into Full Swing

More than two months after the Niigata-Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake, inspections and recovery work at Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS of the Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) are in full swing. Phase II of the inspection inside the reactor at Unit 1 began on September 14. At Unit 7, the pressure vessel head will be opened and an inspection will start in early October, at the earliest. Inspections and recovery work have progressed steadily, with the condition of each unit being looked at carefully.

As for the most important inspections inside the pressure vessels, Phase I was carried from August 21 to 23 at Unit 1, where the pressure vessel head had already been opened for a periodic inspection when the earthquake occurred. On August 23, TEPCO released the results of that inspection, saying that “no abnormalities, such as damage, deformation or drop out, were found,” and also reported them to the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC).

The Phase I inspection was done by lowering a light and camera into the vessel and viewing images sent from the camera. Phase II – inspecting the reactor core and outer circumference of the shroud – began on September 14 and will take about two weeks. Thereafter, inspection will be made of a refueling machine, and the control rods, etc., removed from the reactor. TEPCO will move to Phase III of the inspection around mid-November, and expects to complete it for Unit 1 by year-end.

At Unit 7 – a different type from Unit 1 – which automatically shut down when the earthquake occurred, inspections of the refueling machine and other components will be completed by September 30. In early October, then, the pressure vessel will be opened, and inspections inside the vessel will start. After that, the insides of the pressure vessels at Units 2 through 6 will be inspected individually.

On September 11, TEPCO released the results of its inspection of the bellows inside the ducts above the ground running to the main stacks at Units 1 through 5, as they had been displaced by the earthquake. Of the 18 bellows, 16 showed no special abnormalities, but two in Unit 1 each had a crack, about 1cm wide and about 40cm long. No radioactive substances were detected in any of the 18 bellows. The cracks at Unit 1 had been temporarily repaired on the same day. The main stacks at Units 6 and 7 are on the roofs of the reactor buildings, and inspections have not discovered any abnormalities in them.

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