

TEPCO Held Meetings for Residents Near Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS, Receives Encouragement

On October 16 and 17, respectively, the Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) held meetings for the residents of Kariwa Village and Kashiwazaki City on the current status of the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS, which incurred damage from the giant Niigata-Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake that struck the plant on July 16. About 100 local citizens attended both meetings. While some of them were concerned about the active geological faults lying in the vicinity of the plants, there was almost no opposition or protest raised. In fact, the general atmosphere of the meetings was supportive for the facility, which exists symbiotically with the region, with the power utility receiving words of encouragement from some people wishing for an early resumption of operations.

With exactly three months having passed since the earthquake, TEPCO's Vice-president Ichiro Takekuro and the head of the NPS, Akio Takahashi, among other representatives, first gave an explanation to the local residents about the overall status of damage at the plant. Next, they spoke about the results of the inspections and geological surveys that have been conducted so far, along with the schedule of activities to be taken from now on.

Among the residents, there was particularly a strong concern about the active geological faults in the vicinity of the plant, with there having been many reports about their existence by the local media as well as various opinions offered by experts. Some of the people present at the meeting thought that a nationally-sponsored investigation should be conducted, whose results would then serve as the basis upon which a fair and proper evaluation could be made.

The TEPCO officials responded by saying that it was being assisted by various other agencies and organizations in its investigation efforts. Namely, the Japan Coast Guard, the Japan Institute for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), and others were making specialized surveys of the area surrounding the epicenter offshore, and that the results of their work would be collated and evaluated by the office for the promotion of earthquake investigation and research under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

In addition, various anti-disaster measures were cited, including the development of fire brigades that would be ready on a 24-hour basis, as well as the deployment of a fire engine that could handle chemicals. Along with that, practical training would be offered to reinforce the plant's own fire-extinguishing capabilities. As for dealing with the impact on the area's industries from harmful rumors about the extent of the NPS damage, the TEPCO representatives told the people in attendance that the entire company was engaged in a concerted effort to boost the local economy, such as by carrying out campaigns to attract tourists and promoting local products.

Niigata Governor Urges Rapid Information Dissemination During Disasters

On October 18, Governor Hirohiko Izumida of Niigata Prefecture delivered an address to the Security & Safety Trade Expo (RISCON Tokyo) being held in Tokyo.

He told the audience about his reaction to the multiple disasters that struck Niigata Prefecture over the past three years, including two major earthquakes, heavy snow and severe rains, saying that they made him realize that "each disaster presents a different face." He went on to emphasize that "first actions and reconstruction are two quite different things." From his experience of the July 16 Niigata-Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake, moreover, in which the prefecture made strenuous efforts to gather information, he stressed that it must be seriously understood that "having no information is bad information."

Because the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS lay near the epicentral area of the quake, false rumors

spread early on that there had been radiation leakage, recalled the governor. The harm from those rumors affected not only the industry of the immediate area, but also the prefecture as a whole, with the number of beach visitors in Niigata down by as much as 90% this past summer.

The governor mentioned that the kind of information released by the national government during the initial stage "should not be announcements by the chief cabinet secretary, but rather should be carried out early under the responsibility of experts." He also urged the need also for the head of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) to take a clear stance and position.

JAIF President Makes Inspection of Disaster Area

On October 22, President Takuya Hattori of the Japan Atomic Industrial Forum (JAIF) visited the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS. After receiving an explanation from Akio Takahashi, the director of the NPS, and others, he inspected the conditions of the NPS, which had been hit by a giant earthquake on July 16. He looked primarily at Unit 3, the transformer of which experienced a breakout of a fire right after the earthquake.

Pres. Hattori was able to realize the inspection visit because there was a lull in activity after TEPCO had finished an explanation meeting for residents. As a matter of fact, Pres. Hattori himself used to work at the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS as the deputy director of the construction for two and a half years, starting in 1991, and was involved mainly in the construction of Units 3, 4, 6 and 7.

NPS Director Takahashi said, "I'd like as many people as possible to visit the NPS from now on, especially women," highlighting his policy of actively allowing more visits to the site.



The transformer of the unit-3

Currently, the vessel head of each of the reactor units has been opened so that its interior can be inspected. Also, the main transformers and station service transformers are successively being transported to the place they were manufactured for further inspection. In addition, intense efforts are being made to even out the gradation differences here and there that resulted from the ground subsidence caused by the earthquake.

A tower has been constructed on site in order to make observations of the conditions of the ground, and boring investigation have also been initiated. Covers have been placed on the damaged portions of the exhaust ducts leading to the exhaust tower. Gradual progress is being made on the two-story office building on site, the interior of which was thoroughly wrecked by the temblor. Still, however, the staff of the office building are being forced to work in a makeshift building constructed alongside,

Many of the workers at the NPS also experienced great damage to their own family homes from the earthquake. Although recovery work in the urban districts surrounding the NPS seems to be moving apace on the surface, in fact, some of the buildings destroyed in the earthquake have been left untouched, and vacant sites can be seen throughout the area where buildings have been razed.

Editor: Noriyuki Ishii, JAIF