

METI Plans to Develop New Vitrification Technology in Three-year Plan

The Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has formulated a plan to develop a new liquid-fed ceramic melter and vitrified glass from the next fiscal year (April 2009 to March 2010), in preparation for the renewal of the melter at the Rokkasho Reprocessing Facility of Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. (JNFL).

JNFL will be the primary body in the development effort. Of the total of JPY14 billion (\$130 million at \$1=JPY107.5) to be spent over the coming three years, half, or JPY7 billion (\$65 million), will be shouldered by the national government. METI has requested JPY2 billion (\$19 million) for the next fiscal year alone.

At this point, the new melter is expected to use Joule heating, whereby the material is heated by passing an electric current directly through it. The device will be developed over a three-year period starting in 2009, so as to replace the current one around 2012. METI says that the use of the new glass will make it possible to improve disposal safety margins, thereby reducing the number of vitrified packages.

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