

JNFL: Stirring Rod Used in Vitrification Furnace at Reprocessing Plant Bent at Right Angle

Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited (JNFL) announced on December 11 that it had confirmed that the straight rod used for stirring the bottom of Vitrification Furnace A at its Rokkasho Reprocessing Plant (Aomori Prefecture) was bent at almost a right angle.

The cleaning operations and stirring actions conducted at the furnace since the end of November for the purpose of conducting additional confirmation tests of the furnace's operation ran into trouble when the operators found it difficult to pull out the stirring rod. Operation of the furnace was stopped immediately, and a camera later put inside the furnace on December 10 to confirm the condition of the rod.

Judging from the rod's condition, JNFL believes that the component may have inflicted damage on the interior of the vitrification furnace. In line with the regulations of the reprocessing business, the national government was then duly notified, and both Aomori Prefecture and Rokkasho Village, among others, were given the information, deemed to be in the "A" class of high urgency.

Because the stirring rod needs to be extracted from the vitrification furnace so that an inspection of the furnace interior can be made, the confirmation tests of the furnace's operational functions are expected to be delayed for a considerable time.

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