

Resolution for confirmation that nuclear power plants will not be reactivated unless practical evacuation plans are put in place

Shunichi Tanaka, the chair for the government's Nuclear Power Regulatory Committee explained that, "although there is no binding connection in law, a proper evacuation plan, set up for the safety of local residents" must be a condition for reactivating nuclear power plants. "You can't have one without the other,"* he stated.

The nuclear power disaster response guide presented by the Nuclear Power Regulatory Committee, requests the 135 municipalities within the 30Km radius Urgent Protective Zone to construct an evacuation plan. However, 40% of the municipalities have yet to do so.

What is more, from research conducted in March 2014 in the municipalities of "Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan" signatories, it was clear that even in municipalities where such evacuation plans have been set up, they are "not necessarily effective". It was also apparent that the areas that have been designated to receive evacuees are for different reasons, either still in the process of drafting or have not even started to draft a plan to receive evacuees.

In order to ensure safety, rigorous evacuation training and a practical and effective evacuation plan applicable to situations of severe calamity are essential. However, even though implementation of a nuclear power disaster plan is necessary for municipalities in the UPZ, it is fundamentally impossible for municipalities with populations of over 100,000 to construct an effective evacuation plan. Nuclear power plants should therefore be immediately decommissioned in areas where it is impossible for citizens to evacuate.

During a preparatory meeting of the National Energy Advisory Committee on April 22, the cabinet office administrator responsible for supporting local municipalities' drafting of nuclear power disaster evacuation plans stated that he was "not fully aware of the plans set up by the receiving side of evacuees." If evacuation plans and plans for receiving evacuees are not drafted together, it is self-evident that carrying out the smooth evacuation of citizens becomes impossible. In spite of all this, if the government administrator was indeed completely unaware of the receiving sides plans, it begs the question if the government is really serious about citizens' safety.

It is absolutely unacceptable to pass a decision to reactivate the nuclear reactors while ignoring both the state of affairs in and the evacuation plans of municipalities charged with receiving evacuees. These municipalities would receive evacuees not only from municipalities in the area but from municipalities within the UPZ, too. Moreover, nuclear power disasters, as we saw through the Fukushima power plant accident, take place over an extended period of time. Due to this, drafting plans to address evacuees daily needs and to ensure their return to the original area are also necessary.

As mayors of our communities, we are charged with the responsibility to protect the lives and property of our citizens. We therefore make a strong call to the government to clarify its policy of “not permitting the reactivation of nuclear power plants unless plans for evacuation, evacuee reception, evacuee life, and evacuee return are drafted by all municipalities affected by the reactivation of nuclear power plants.”

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Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan

*24 October 2014 stated during a regular press release.