

[朝日新聞デジタル Japanese](#) [朝日新聞中文网 Chinese](#) [Asahi Asia Antenna - 독자와 함께 Korean](#)

Ministry forced to start radioactive waste disposal site plan over

February 26, 2013

5

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Fierce local opposition has forced the Environment Ministry to scrap and redo the selection of candidate sites to dispose of high-level radioactive waste from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The ministry admitted on Feb. 25 in regard to the site selection process, “there was a lack of communication with local governments.”

The ministry said it will set up a platform to discuss the situation with local mayors and will ask experts to reconsider examination methods for the selection of disposal sites for incinerated ash and sludge with high concentrations of radioactive substances.

The do-over will inevitably delay the summer 2014 planned start of hauling waste to the sites.

The central government has decided that “designated waste” containing more than 8,000 becquerels of radioactive cesium per kilogram will be disposed of within Tochigi, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba and Gunma prefectures.

The Environment Ministry plans to build a final disposal site in each of the prefectures.

But the plan has stalled due to vehement opposition from leaders in Yaita, Tochigi Prefecture, and Takahagi, Ibaraki Prefecture. These cities were chosen as final candidate sites last autumn.

After reviewing the site selection process, following the administration change in December, the ministry has acknowledged there were problems. The ministry's actions created a strong backlash, having failed to beforehand provide local governments with sufficient explanation of the site selection process. Research and experts' assessments were also insufficient in regards to guaranteeing the safety of disposal sites.

The ministry said it will meet with governors and mayors and detail the need for disposal sites and solicit feedback on proceeding with the plan.

It will also establish an expert panel to reconsider evaluation points and examination methods in narrowing the list of candidate sites and assess safety issues in the closing stages of the selection process.

The ministry said it will return the status of the cities of Yaita and Takahagi to options among many candidates for sites.

Shinji Inoue, senior vice environment minister, visited Tochigi Governor Tomikazu Fukuda and Yaita Mayor Tadashi Endo on Feb. 25 to seek their cooperation.

Although Inoue said he could not confirm it with certainty, construction of the sites will apparently be substantially delayed. That

will prolong even more the current situation where radioactive-tainted waste is being temporarily stored at sites that have insufficient safety measures.

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN