Nuclear Regulation Authority drafts new safety rules for plants

TOKYO — Japan's nuclear watchdog on Wednesday published new draft safety standards that it hopes will prevent a repeat of the disaster at Fukushima.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) said measures must be taken to defend nuclear power plants against tsunamis, earthquakes and terrorist attacks.

Under the proposed rules there will be a ban on building reactors near active tectonic faults, which themselves will be redefined in a move that will make many more of them fit that definition.

At present, active faults are defined as those that have moved in the last 130,000 years, but the NRA will move the benchmark to any time in the last 400,000 years.

Up to five nuclear plants in Japan sit atop a possible active seismic fault, NRA-appointed experts have said.

Shunichi Tanaka, chairman of the NRA, said that plants would have to be able to survive a direct hit from a hijacked airliner or ship, as well as withstand tsunamis like the one that crippled Fukushima.

The move comes after repeated criticism that lax regulation and an overly cozy relationship between authorities and the big-money companies they were supposed to police worsened the catastrophe of March 2011, when a tsunami swamped the coastal Fukushima Daiichi plant.

Hundreds of thousands of people were made homeless by the disaster and tracts of prime agricultural land were left unfarmable after radiation spread across a large area.

Anti-nuclear sentiment is running high in Japan, which used to rely on atomic power for around 50% of its energy needs.

The proposals will now go out to public consultation for 30 days and new rules will come into force in mid-July.

All but two of Japan's reactors remain offline after being shuttered for regular safety checks in the aftermath of the 2011 crisis.

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running, clean-up.

2. Forcibly close any company which enjoys a monopoly in a region with good profit margins while putting off safety changes and new measures recommended by independent nuclear safety organisations.

3. Make people criminally responsible for negligence.

That would be a good start...

Are they sure they mean 'rules' and not just 'suggestions that the company can choose to follow if they wish'?

Or in the words of Captain Jack Sparrow, 'The Code is more like...Guidelines.'

Rules? Don't they mean, guidelines? So, the meltdown at Fukushima will end up costing the whole country billions of dollars (not yen), and these twits still haven't learned anything from it? It has been clearly documented that the meltdown at Fukushima was a manmade error and caused by lax safety standards, yet here they are giving 'guidelines' and not direct orders? Seriously? WTF!!!

We don't need rules or guidelines. We need Laws with very heavy prosecutions with large fines and prison time for those not following them and the threat of taking away the nuclear power plants from companies not willing to follow the laws. We don't need power companies to be given a five year grace period to update their reactors but allowed to run them with the old systems and safety standards.

Why bother with nuclear energy? It is too dangerous, you cannot dispose of it, no private insurer would insure a nuke plant. Japan is swimming in Geo-thermal, harness that. On top of that there is solar, wind, and tidal power, there are options.

Looks like a good list of rules but they need teeth, just like the rats that can so easily bring down operating systems of a nuclear plant.