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Survey: No nuclear plants meet new safety standards

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THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

None of Japan's 16 nuclear power plants has satisfied the government's proposed [new safety standards](#), making them ineligible to be restarted in the near future, according to an Asahi Shimbun survey.

For nine of the plants, operators even said they cannot tell when they can meet the new requirements being drafted by the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

The Asahi Shimbun contacted 10 electric utilities to check the progress in safety precautions they have made since the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

The 16 plants do not include the Fukushima No. 1 plant.

The NRA will begin accepting applications for safety screening for the nation's 50 nuclear reactors based on the new standards in July. Only those reactors that pass the screening can be restarted. Utilities have been installing safety equipment and taking other precautions.

But Toyoshi Fuketa, an NRA commissioner in charge of the safety standards, said no utilities may be ready to submit applications for screening in July due to delays in implementing safety measures.

None of the 16 plants has filtered venting equipment for containment vessels, which is required under the draft outline of the new standards released at the end of January.

Work to install the equipment, which guards against the release of radioactive materials in an accident, has begun only for two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Niigata Prefecture. Tokyo Electric Power Co. had envisaged bringing all the seven reactors at the plant back online in phases from April 2013.

Restarting boiling water reactors--the same type of reactors as those at the Fukushima No. 1 plant--will be particularly difficult because the NRA plans to grant no grace period for installing filtered venting equipment for those reactors.

A coastal levee or other facilities to prevent flooding by tsunami, which are also listed in the draft outline, have been installed only at the Onagawa plant in Miyagi Prefecture and the Shika plant in Ishikawa Prefecture.

Three plants located on a hill—the Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture, the Genkai plant in Saga Prefecture and the Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture—are not required to set up a levee.

The Hamaoka plant in Shizuoka Prefecture was erecting a levee but has been forced to make it taller because new government estimates show higher tsunami are possible.

The draft outline also calls for a main quake-resistant building, which will serve as an operations base in the event of an accident.

Only seven plants have constructed such a building. The Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture, the only nuclear plant operating in Japan, plans to build one during the first half of fiscal 2015.

Five plants, as well as the Monju prototype fast breeder reactor, could face further delays because the NRA said on-site investigations are necessary on the risk of active faults.

An expert panel under the NRA concluded that active faults likely run under the Tsuruga plant in Fukui Prefecture and the Higashidori plant in Aomori Prefecture.

A reactor at the Tsuruga plant may have to be decommissioned because the reactor building sits on a suspected active fault.

In addition, a fault that runs directly beneath reactor buildings at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant may be defined as active.

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