In what is hopefully a long-term solution to Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s (TEPCO) radioactive water storage issues in the stricken Fukushima nuclear power plant, the embattled utility company is set to transfer the huge amounts of tainted liquid from its leaking underground cisterns to above-ground storage tanks. The transfer pipeline itself suffered other leaks, causing further delays in the process, but TEPCO is assuring the public that the transfer will start on April 16.

The transfer process was supposed to start on Sunday, April 14, but another leak was discovered in the pipes that required a string of “unexpected inspections.” Work is still being done to confirm the safety of the transfer process, but TEPCO officials are positive that the process can start immediately on the 16th of April. TEPCO also assured that the delayed start date would not affect the target date of completion in June. “Even though the start (of the water transfer) was delayed, it won’t affect the planned completion of the transfer (in June),” said TEPCO spokesman Masayuki Ono.

The decommissioning of the Fukushima nuclear power plant is a long process that will take almost 40 years, according to nuclear experts. This is not helped at all by the numerous issues TEPCO has faced in the past few days, incidents related to the water being used to cool down the melted reactor cores. It started with rodents shorting out a control board and effectively hampering the process for days. Another short-circuit occurred during the installation of electrical tools to prevent small animals from destroying equipment. This was all before the underground storage cisterns started to leak radioactive water into the environment. The plans to transfer to above-ground storage seems like the logical choice – and probably the only choice at this point for TEPCO. The next questions that will be asked will be if the above-ground storage units can keep up with the huge amounts of radioactive water from the reactor cooling process.

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