

TEPCO to install filtered vent at nuclear reactor

Tokyo Electric Power says it will install a filter-equipped emergency vent system to reduce levels of radioactivity released in the air in case of a meltdown at a nuclear power plant.

The company said on Thursday that it will start work to install the system at the Number 7 reactor of its Kashiwazaki plant in Niigata next week.

The system comprises a water tank 4 meters long and 8 meters high, to be installed next to the reactor.

In an emergency, contaminated steam released from a reactor vessel to lower pressure inside the structure would be filtered through water before it enters the atmosphere.

The process can reduce levels of radioactive iodine and cesium by a factor of up to 1,000.

In the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi accident, failure to promptly conduct a vent operation caused serious damage to a containment vessel, leading to a massive release of radioactive substances.

To step up safety, Tokyo Electric and other utilities plan to install filtered vents at all their reactors.

The government's Nuclear Regulation Authority also plans to make installation of filtered vents a requirement for restarting idle reactors.

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