
TEPCO: Damaged reactor can withstand quakes

The operator of the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant says the pool to store spent fuel in the 4th reactor building is strong enough to resist earthquakes.

The company examines the spent fuel storage pool every 3 months, checking the slant of the structure, its walls, and strength.

The 4th reactor building was heavily damaged by a hydrogen explosion shortly after the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

This raised concerns about the quake-resistance of the pool that contains more than 1,500 fuel rods, the most of any reactor building in the plant.

The utility says for the first time, an outside expert observed the latest inspection.

The observer says that the fuel storage pool was close to level and the building was not distorted.

The expert also says no major change was seen in the size of a protrusion in the western wall believed to have been created by the blast.

The observer says the bump stretched a maximum 4.6 centimeters in the 13-meter high wall, with little change from the previous measurement in November.

But an NHK reporter says the inspection left doubt regarding the objectivity of the survey and assessment as the utility allowed only one expert to observe the process and did not make public who that person was.

Feb. 14, 2013 - Updated 02:06 UTC (11:06 JST)