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Saturday, April 9, 2011

Toshiba hopes to decommission reactors in 10 years

Kyodo News

Toshiba Corp. has proposed decommissioning four troubled nuclear reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant in about 10 years, much shorter than the 14 years needed to dismantle the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania, industry sources said Friday.

Toshiba filed the proposal with Tokyo Electric Power Co. and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, after compiling it with U.S. nuclear energy firms, including its Westinghouse Electric Co. subsidiary, according to the sources.

Toshiba believes it can rely on the U.S. firms' experience of the 1979 Three Mile Island accident to decommission Tepco's Fukushima reactors.

According to the proposal, it will take about 10 years to remove the fuel rods in the containers and the spent nuclear fuel rods in the storage pools from the four reactors, as well as demolish various on-site facilities and improve the soil condition.

Japan's other reactor maker, Hitachi Ltd., which is in a tieup with General Electric Co. of the United States, is expected to file its own proposal, the sources said.

Tepco and METI are expected to look into the proposals by Toshiba and Hitachi before moving to dismantle the reactors. The four reactors were crippled in the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northeast coast.

Chubu Electric Power Co. is currently working on decommissioning two reactors at the Hamaoka nuclear plant in Omaezaki, Shizuoka Prefecture, with work scheduled to end by March 2037.

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