
Nuclear safety board draws up new guidelines

Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority has drawn up a final draft of new safety guidelines for protecting nuclear reactors from serious damage by earthquakes and tsunamis.

An expert panel of the authority adopted the draft on Tuesday. Barring revisions, the guidelines are to become law by July.

They would continue Japan's ban on building nuclear reactors over active faults – defined as those that have moved in the past 120,000 and 130,000 years or later. But the guidelines would extend the time frame to 400,000 years ago for faults that are hard to analyze.

The guidelines stipulate clearly for the first time that plant operators must prepare for the highest possible tsunamis for all of their reactors.

The rules call for safety measures including breakwaters and other steps to keep water from entering key facilities, as well as ways to minimize flood damage.

They would also require plant operators to ensure that reactors and other key facilities are not seriously affected by geological changes caused by earthquakes.

Another expert panel of the authority is working to draw up guidelines to protect against severe nuclear accidents. The rules are to be enforced starting in July.

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