

Comment on the Newspaper Reports about the Plutonium-Thermal Program

November 18, 2014

Federation of Electric Power Companies

Recently there have been newspaper articles reporting that there is a "revision of the current plan" for the Plutonium-Thermal Program (*1).

The electric power companies of Japan are currently aiming to introduce MOX fuels in 16 to 18 reactors by FY 2015 (announced in 2009).

The current program is based on the principle to not retain plutonium that has no use, and was established for steadily using the plutonium recovered at the Rokkasho reprocessing plant, including Japan's plutonium inventory overseas. There is no change in this basic principle.

However, considering the latest construction schedule for the Oma Nuclear Power Plant (*2) and the progress rate of the reviews of the nuclear power plants for compliance with the safety requirements for their restart, we see that there is a need to reconsider the time line of the introduction of MOX fuels, which is currently set for FY2015.

The details of the Plutonium-Thermal Program, as well as the schedule for the use of plutonium, will be determined before any additional plutonium is recovered at the reprocessing plant. The prospects for restarting the nuclear power plants and the timing of the start of operation of the reprocessing plant will be taken into account, and announcements will be made accordingly.

For Japan, which has limited resources, the importance of the nuclear fuel cycle, including the plutonium-thermal technology, remains unaltered in view of the effective use of uranium resources, and we will continue to make utmost efforts to introduce the plutonium-thermal technology.

(*1) "Plutonium-thermal" is a term for the technology in which the plutonium separated from spent fuel through reprocessing is mixed with uranium to produce mix oxide (MOX) fuel, and used in light water reactors of existing nuclear power plants.

(*2) J-Power's Oma Nuclear Power Plant, currently under construction, aims to use MOX fuels in all reactor cores as part of the plutonium-thermal program. According to J-Power's measures and schedule for safety enhancement of the power plant announced on November 13 this year, the construction is planned for completion in December 2020.