

GREEN ACTION

グリーン・アクション

Is Japan headed for another Fukushima?

Japan's Nuclear Regulatory Authority Capitulates to Electric Utility on Earthquake Assessment

For immediate release

Contact: Aileen Mioko Smith +81-90-3620-9251

10 June 2013, Kyoto, Japan----Today, Japan's Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NRA), in a complete about-face, yielded to Kansai Electric, the second largest utility in Japan at an NRA hearing assessing whether or not the only two nuclear power plants operating in Japan today, Ohi Nuclear Power Plant Units 3 and 4 would be allowed to operate after new regulatory standards come into force 17 July.

NRA's "Ohi Nuclear Power Plant Status Assessment Hearing" (Ohi Genpatsu no Genjo ni Kansuru Hyohka Kaigo) began on 19 April with the NRA requiring Kansai Electric to assess the earthquake motion that would occur at the Ohi plant when three earthquake fault lines located in close proximity to the plant would shift in unison, causing over 80 kilometers of earthquake fault to move. This signified that the plants would have to withstand a much more violent earthquake that they had been previously assessed to withstand with only two of the faults shifting in unison. The three-fault assessment was being demanded by the NRA based on the lessons learned from Fukushima where multiple faults moved in unison.

Today, however, the NRA made no objection when Kansai Electric blatantly ignored the NRA's demands for a full three earthquake fault assessment, taking into consideration evidence that the earthquake would shift not only horizontally but vertically and placing the asperity* under the plant. Kansai Electric ignored all significant demands of the NRA, yet the NRA remained silent, behaving totally differently from its attitude in previous hearings. Instead, at the conclusion of today's hearing, the Nuclear Regulatory Agency declared that tomorrow's hearing will proceed with assessing the plant facility because "we are running out of time." The assessment will no doubt be based on Kansai Electric's preferred earthquake motion description as given by the utility today.

Six Japanese NGOs including "Green Action"**, "Mihama-no-Kai"*** and the "The Nuclear Regulatory Authority Citizen Watchdog" issued a statement protesting today's hearing. The statement (in Japanese) can be found at:

<http://www.greenaction-japan.org/modules/wordpress/index.php?p=653>

* "An asperity is an area on a fault that is stuck. The earthquake rupture usually begins at an asperity." Source: U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

** Green Action and Mihama-no-Kai are the two NGOs that issued a statement last June stating that the earthquake faults under Ohi Units 3 and 4 should be investigated.