

## **Motives and Background to Problems with Maintenance Work at Nuclear Power Plants**

- The most important concern of employees in the nuclear maintenance sections is to complete periodical inspections, and to ensure that their own generating plant be brought back on line as scheduled. These employees had a strong sense of responsibility in this regard. The management of the nuclear departments also had the same strong sense of responsibility.
- However, the following factors yielded the concerns of those involved that they would not have been able to keep to the time schedule for the periodical inspections if they reported problems to the regulator.
  - > A lack of clarity concerning the level of problems to be reported
  - > The technical standards of nuclear power facilities are specified on the basis of those established when they were commissioned.
  - > It tends to take a significant length of time if a regulator approves a new maintenance method which has so far not been applied.
  - > Almost all the working processes take place in water using remote control technology in the nuclear reactors
- In these circumstances, people in the maintenance sections had gradually fostered the idea that they should like to avoid reports to the regulator if these were nothing to do with safety. In addition, influenced by this way of thinking, they became reluctant even to notify local communities in the vicinity of nuclear power plants, although the relationship of mutual trust should have been maintained.
- In addition, the following factors engendered the mistaken idea that they did not have to make a report as long as there was no safety issue:
  - > Pressure relating to the serious public response to problems in nuclear power plants;
  - > Overconfidence that they understood nuclear power best.
- The idea that they should like to avoid reports to the regulator whenever possible, together with the mistaken idea that failure to report could be permitted as long as there was no safety issue, resulted in the following incorrect action.
  - > Records of problems and the subsequent repair work were deleted in inspection records in order to avoid any subsequent controversy over the need to report these facts.
  - > In order to ensure consistency with the first action, there were further misconducts to falsify the dates of discovery, as well as to conceal things which occurred in the past.

- Furthermore, the following factors led to this misconduct being repeated over a long period of time.
  - > The internal system of checking, which includes auditing and management assessment procedures regarding safety management and the quality assurance of nuclear power, did not act effectively on the problems;
  - > An organizational climate was fostered in the nuclear sections in which no one could express his/her own opinions because the sections comprised a homogeneous society with a limited number of members.

## **Conclusion**

- The Internal Investigation Committee has reached the following conclusion as a result of its investigation:
  - > Against the background of a range of circumstances relating to inspection and maintenance work in nuclear power plants, the idea has been fostered that it would be preferable to avoid reporting problems to the regulator whenever possible. This was combined with the mistaken idea that a failure to report could be permitted as long as there was no safety issue. This therefore caused problems. Furthermore, the internal system of checking did not work, and the exclusive organizational climate in the nuclear sections has encouraged and maintained these problems.
- There is no excuse for the action of employees in the nuclear sections, since they betrayed public trust. However, not only the nuclear sections but also our company as a whole should consider the fact that this conduct was not prevented, and that the organizational climate may have encouraged this misconduct.
- It is also true that our company cannot by itself solve a number of issues which are behind the background of these problems.
- Our company will maximize efforts to improve our internal system of checking, to prevent problems from recurring. We will also work to improve the rules and method of operation in question that have been identified, while gaining the understanding of the public and of those involved.