

Bloomberg - Japan to Install Vent System for Reactors After Fukushima Crisis - Tsuyoshi Inajima

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By Tsuyoshi Inajima - Feb 8, 2012 12:39 AM ET

Japan's power utilities plan to install vent systems with filters for nuclear reactors to reduce radioactive releases in the event of an accident, an industry group said.

The system will cut emission of radioactive particles to less than one-thousandth of usual volumes, the Federation of Electric Power Companies, a group of 10 regional utilities, said in [presentation materials](#) at a government meeting yesterday. The companies will also install equipment to remotely vent steam and gas, it said.

Meltdowns and the release of radiation at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear station after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami forced about 160,000 people to evacuate and made areas near the plant uninhabitable. Japan's utilities are trying to improve the safety of nuclear plants, with three of the country's 54 reactors on-line and no date set to resume commercial operations at the others.

"We all know there is no such thing as perfect safety," Tomoko Murakami, a Tokyo-based nuclear researcher at Institute of Energy Economics, said by telephone today. "The point is what criteria should be used to decide the restart of a reactor? I don't think installing a filtered venting would be one of the criteria."

The companies are considering details of the plan and haven't decided when to start building the filter-equipped vent systems, Tetsu Oshikiri, a spokesman for the federation, said by phone today.

Sweden, Switzerland

Installing the system will probably take more than three years and cost several billions of yen, said Murakami, who worked at Japan Atomic Power Co. for 13 years. Countries including Sweden and [Switzerland](#) have installed filtered vent systems at their nuclear stations, Murakami said.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission may direct plant owners to improve safety at the nation's 104 operating reactors by March 9, Robert Fretz, a senior project manager in the agency's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, said Jan. 17. Orders dealing with emergency equipment, reliable vents and spent-fuel pool instruments are being drafted, he said.

The "safety myth" of nuclear power may have caused Japan to delay taking steps, including installation of filtered vent systems, to minimize damage in an accident, Murakami said. The Fukushima disaster shattered the myth, Murakami said.

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