

Supporting the safety of nuclear energy



Since the March 2011 nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan, the NEA and its member governments have been making numerous efforts to support and to further reinforce the safety of nuclear energy. Multiple verification activities and “stress tests” have been implemented in all NEA member countries using nuclear power, and follow-up measures have already begun to be implemented.

In November 2011, an NEA team of international experts met in Tokyo with the Japanese Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) and the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organisation (JNES) to foster a better understanding of other NEA member countries’ post-Fukushima national safety reviews (“stress tests”), international guidance and review methodologies. The programme included a technical experts’ meeting for sharing information on national reviews, an international seminar on stress tests with the Japanese nuclear industry and the public, and a meeting with an advisory committee supporting the regulatory reviews of licensee analyses as part of the Japanese stress tests. Experts from Japan, Finland, France, Korea, the United Kingdom, the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) took part. Presentations can be consulted on the NEA Fukushima information exchange page of the NEA website.

In terms of recovery from the accident, on 16 October 2011, an International Symposium on Decontamination – Towards the Recovery of the Environment was held in Fukushima Prefecture. Organised by the Ministry of Environment of Japan with the collaboration of the NEA and the IAEA, the symposium, in which I participated, provided a 400+ audience of Japanese government experts, local elected officials and members of the Japanese public with an overview of NEA member countries’ experience in these important areas as well as experience from other countries.

In the area of nuclear regulation, the NEA will send experts to Japan to support the elaboration of the new nuclear safety regulatory framework and the establishment of the new regulatory authority. The Japanese government aims to have an updated framework before the end of the year and a new regulatory authority at the end of March 2012. The senior NEA experts supporting Japan will include members of the NEA Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities (CNRA).

Two new working groups have been established at the NEA in relation to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident: the CNRA Senior-level Task Group on Impacts of the Fukushima Accident and the NEA Committee on Radiation Protection and Public Health (CRPPH) Expert Group on Radiological Protection Aspects of the Fukushima Accident. Other established NEA groups and committees are examining safety, communication and radiological protection aspects of severe accident management and post-accident recovery, as well as liability and compensation issues (see in particular the article on page 9). In the year to come, the Agency will continue to analyse the various aspects of the accident and to share internationally the lessons that can be learnt.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Luis E. Echávarri'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Luis E. Echávarri
NEA Director-General