Light and Water in Fukushima

Arjun Makhijani

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

福島第一原発のタービン建屋の水と照明につい て

Issues of Water and Light in the Turbine Buildings at Fukushima Daiichi (Available in Japanese below)

Arjun Makhijani

Workers at the Fukushima Daiichi plant have been trying to reestablish electricity connections to pumps so as to restart the cooling system for the reactors at the plant. According to news reports, two of the major obstacles have been

- \bullet a high radiation environment (on the order of 1,000 millisieverts per hour) due to contaminated water on the floor of the turbine buildings, and
- a lack of light in the turbine buildings, which has forced the electricians to work in the dark.

The combination of these two factors has made it exceedingly difficult to accomplish the objective and has so far frustrated it. Pumping water out of the reactor buildings has not been possible since there are no empty tanks on site of sufficient capacity to hold the water, which is too contaminated to be pumped into the ocean. Recent reports indicate that the water is also leaking out of the building on to the site, further contaminating the working environment and complicating efforts to bring the problem of cooling the reactors and spent fuel pools under control.

It is extremely difficult to suggest possible courses of action from afar; yet sometimes, the ability to bring the experience of other localities and technological challenges to bear on a problem may be helpful. In this spirit, we put forward a suggestion in the hope that it might be considered by those on site who are struggling with the very difficult and complex effort to bring seven major sources of radioactivity under control (three reactors and four spent fuel pools). The suggestions presented here may or may not be suitable courses of action. However, they may be worthy of consideration after which the authorities may decide whether they merit implementation or suggest alternative approaches. It should be understood explicitly, that we are not recommending that the steps outlined below be implemented, since we are not in a position to evaluate the various possible safety and feasibility issues associated with them. The responsibility for making and



implementing decisions belongs fully and solely to the Japanese government's safety authorities and the Tokyo Electric Power Company.

A. Light

Punching holes into the roof of the turbine buildings (with due consideration to the hydrogen that may be in them) could provide an initial amount of light, which would enable much more work to be done in the 15 minutes to which workers are limited under the current radiation conditions (according to news reports). At that point, explosion-proof lights using small external generators could also be introduced into the buildings through the holes in the roof to further facilitate work. Any increased radioactivity in the atmosphere outside the turbine building is likely to be very minor compared to the radioactivity on site already, and puncturing the roof will reduce radiation doses greatly once the leakage onto the site is stopped and the water in the building evacuated. Any increased radiation will also likely be temporary since this method will facilitate the removal of water in the building provided the pumping is maintained while the source of the leak is being repaired (if possible).

B. Pumping out water

It is suggested that an empty oil tanker of sufficient size to accommodate the accumulated water and that anticipated to leak into the turbine buildings in the coming period be brought as close to the site as possible. (Alternatively, two tankers may provide a more flexible arrangement, since one could carry water away for unloading into tanks elsewhere

in Japan.) The radioactive water can be pumped into the tanker, which can serve as a floating tank. Fresh water to cool the reactors and spent fuel pools is already being brought to site by U.S. barges. This would be the reverse of the process. Of course, it is recognized that the vessel would probably have to be written off, but in the scheme of damages that have already occurred and that may occur if the regular cooling system is not made functional soon, it would seem that this may not a major consideration. Since the water is extremely radioactive, pumping out water and putting it in a ship's hold (like putting it in a tank on land) will involve some hazards that the authorities should evaluate and take the necessary precautions. For instance, there could be residual radioactive noble gases in the water; it is established that there are volatile radionuclides, notably iodine-131. Other iodine isotopes may also be present. Appropriate arrangements to protect workers pumping the water and those managing the filling of the holds on board, such as venting of the holds, should be made. Finally, given that the water contains a significant concentration of longlived cesium-137, we stress that it should not be discharged into the ocean, into any other body of water, or onto land; neither should it be injected into the ground. It should be held in large tanks away from the site that are appropriately seismically qualified and checked regularly. The water should be held until all the short-lived radionuclides are decayed away so that the rest can be captured, for instance by ion exchange in resins, as is done with reactor primary water.

C. Conclusion

It appears urgent to devise ways of lighting the turbine building at least by daylight and preferably also by electric explosion-proof lamps. The suggestions above are for



consideration and evaluation by the Japanese governmental authorities and by TEPCO. They are not recommendations for action, but could provide ideas that might be useful in an extremely difficult and dangerous situation; they may also be rejected if found unsafe or unsuitable for any reason. The responsibility for evaluation and implementation rests, of course, entirely with the Japanese governmental authorities and with TEPCO who may accept, reject, or modify them as appropriate. Our only desire is to be helpful at a very difficult time for the Japanese people and for the workers and managers who are trying their best to manage the unprecedented nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

This paper was reviewed by Dr. Ferenc Dalnoki-Veress and Dr. Patricia Lewis. I am grateful for their helpful comments. As the author, I alone take responsibility for its final contents and any deficiencies that remain.

Arjun Makhijani is president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (www.ieer.org)

福島第一原発のタービン建屋の水と照明につい て

Arjun Makhijani

エネルギー環境研究所所長

アージュン・マキジャーニ

福島第一原発の作業員たちは原子炉の冷却シス

テムに電源をつなぎ復旧するために尽力してきている。報道によると、次の二つの主要な障壁があるとされる。

- タービン建屋の床に溜まった水の汚染により、 高放射線の環境となっていること(毎時約1[000ミリシーベルト)。
- タービン建屋に照明がなく、電気技師たちは暗闇で作業をすることを強いられていること。

この二つの要因が重なったせいで、目的を達成するのが極めて困難になっている。十分な容量のあるタンクが現場にないので、原子炉建屋から水を汲み出すことができず、水は汚染がひとく海に流すことはできない。最新の報告によれば、水は建屋の外にまで漏れ出しており、作業環境を更に汚染し、原子炉と使用済み燃料プール冷却の問題を制御可能にするための努力は難航している。

遠くにいながら解決策を提案するというのは大 変難しいことではある。しかし、場合によって は、ある問題に対し、他の場所での経験や、別 の状況で起こった技術的問題の経験を生かすこ とができるかもしれない。このような観点から、 放射性物質の主な7つの発生源(3つの原子炉 と4つの使用済み燃料プール)を制御するため、 非常に困難で複雑な作業に携わっている現場の 人たちに検討してもらえばと思い、ここに提案 をしたい。

ここに提示する方策は適切なものかもしれないし、そうでない可能性もある。しかし関係者に検討してもらい、実行に移す価値があるか、または別の方策を取るか決めてもらえればと思う。私たちはこの提案に伴う様々な安全性や実行にはないので、下記の方法を実行するように、勧めているわけではないを実行するように、勧めている思決定と実行の責任は完全に、日本政府の原子力安全機関と東



京電力にあり、他にはない。

照明について

タービン建屋の屋根に複数の穴を開ける(建屋 内にありうる水素に十分留意した上で)ことで 採光が可能になり、(報道によると)現在の放 射線の状況下で許されている15分という作業 時間でも、かなり仕事がはかどる。その時点で、 屋根の穴を通して、小型の外部発電機を使って 防爆性照明を導入できればさらに仕事はしやす くなるだろう。大気中に放出する放射線は増え るが、すでに敷地内にある放射線に比べたら大 した問題にはならないだろう. また、いったん 敷地内への水漏れが止まり建屋内の水も除去さ れれば、屋根に開いている穴が放射線量を大き く抑えることになるだろう。この方法は建屋内 の水の除去を容易化するため、水漏れの元を修 理(それが可能なら)している間もポンプ排水 が続くのであれば、放射線の増加も一時的なも のになるだろう。

排水について

水は放射線量が特に高いので、排水を船倉に入れる作業は(陸上のタンクに入れるときと同様

に)危険を伴うものであり、当局は注意深く予防措置を取らなければいけない。例えば、水に残留放射性希ガスがある可能性がある。また、揮発性の放射性核種、とりわけヨウ素 1 1 1 がある事は確実とされる。他ヨウ素同位体もある可能性がある。排水作業や船倉への注水作業を担当する人たちの安全を守るため、ホールドの換気等の適切な措置が必要である。

最後に、溜まり水に半減期が長いセシウム 1 [] 7 が相当量含まれることを考えると、海に流したり、他の水域に流したり、陸上に流すといったことは避ける必要があると強調したい。現場にころで、地震対応の条件を満たしる。半減期の短い核種が崩壊し尽くし、残りを、たとえば原子炉の一次冷却水でするように、たオン交換樹脂によるイオン交換といった方法で取り込むことが出来るようになるまで、水は貯蔵しておかなければならない。

結論

タービン建屋に少なくとも外の光を入れ、可能 なら電気防爆性ランプを使って照明を緊急に確 保する必要がある。上記にした提案は日本の当 局と東京電力によって検討し評価してもらうも のである。これらの行動を推奨しているのでは なく、この極めて困難で危険な状況において、 役に立つかもしれないアイデアを提供するもの である。何らかの理由で安全性に問題があった り、不適切であるものならば却下されるべきで ある。評価と遂行の責任は当然、全て日本政府 の当局と東京電力にあり、採用するか、却下す るか、修正するかも必要に応じてするべきであ る。私たちは、日本の人たちにとって非常に困 難な時期に、そして福島第一原発における未曾 有の核の危機を切り抜けるために、最善を尽く している作業員と責任者の皆さんの一助になれ ればと願うばかりである。

この論文はフェレンク・ダルノキーベレス博士 とパトリシア・ルイス博士にレビューをしても らった。両博士の助言に感謝する。著者として、 私がこの論文の内容と、まだあるかもしれない 欠陥について責任を持つ。

アージュン・マキジャーニはエネルギー環境研究所所長である。www.ieer.org

訳者注: この翻訳は正確を期したつもりですが、 日本語版と英語版の間に解釈や意味の違いが生 じる可能性があります。この文書については英 語版が唯一の正式文書です。日本語訳は、あく まで参考として利用してください。

UPDATE (March 29, APJ Editors)

While taking care to downplay the possibility of a Chernobyl-like explosion and dispersion of radiation, The Guardian quotes scientists and observers who believe that a meltdown has already taken place at Fukushima. Richard Lahey, head of safety research at GE when the Fukushima reactors were installed, is quoted as saying, "The reason we are concerned is that they are detecting water outside the containment area that is highly radioactive and it can only have come from the reactor core. It's not going to be anything like Chernobyl, where it went up with a big fire and steam explosion, but it's not going to be good news for the environment."