

After Fukushima: EU Stress tests start on 1 June

From 1 June 2011 onwards, all 143 nuclear power plants in the EU will be re-assessed using EU wide criteria. These are comprehensive tests as the Commission has called for which embrace both natural and man made hazards (i.e. effects of airplane crashes and terrorist attacks). The European Commission and the European Nuclear Safety Regulators' Group (ENSREG) agreed today on the criteria covered and the way controls will be done.

Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy, said: "I appreciate that the Commission and the Member States' regulators have been able to agree on comprehensive and ambitious risk and safety assessments for nuclear power plants. We will put all our efforts into implementing the highest safety standards for nuclear power plants in and close to the European Union. The tough part starts now: implementing the criteria with all the necessary rigour."

The European Commission and the European Nuclear Safety Regulators' Group (ENSREG), which represents the 27 independent national authorities responsible for nuclear safety, have today agreed on the scope and the modalities for a comprehensive risk and safety assessment of EU nuclear power plants. The stress tests are re-assessments of the safety margins of the EU nuclear power plants. To guarantee the highest safety standards in the world, the EU draws the lessons from Fukushima and focuses in the tests on all sorts of natural disasters and includes also the effects of man-made accidents such as airplane crashes as well as terrorist or other malevolent attacks.

All security-related aspects such as measures preventing terroristic attacks will be dealt separately, following discussions with Member States recognising among others the need for confidentiality.

From the 1 June onwards, nuclear power plants will be re-assessed in a three-step-process:

- **Pre-assessment** by the nuclear power plant operators which answer the stress tests questionnaire, submitting supporting documents, studies and plans.
- **National Report** drawn up by the national regulator checking whether answers of nuclear power plant operators are credible.
- **Peer reviews.** Multinational teams will review the national reports. These teams will consist of seven people – one European Commission representative and six Members of the 27 national regulators. The exact composition of each team will be decided later. Teams can decide to inspect nuclear plants on the spot.

The Commission is also in close contact with countries outside the EU and is working with them on re-assessing their nuclear power plants. These are in particular Switzerland, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Armenia.

Background:

Following the nuclear accident in Fukushima on 11 March, the EU Commission has pressed for a re-assessment of all EU nuclear power plants. The aim is to learn from the event and rule out that a similar disaster can happen in the EU.

The European Council of 24/25 March 2011 stressed the need to fully draw the lessons from recent events related to the accident in Japan, and to provide all necessary information to the public. Recalling that the energy mix is the competence of Member States, the Council called for work to be taken forward as a matter of priority on the following aspects:

- "The safety of all EU nuclear plants should be reviewed, on the basis of a comprehensive and transparent risk and safety assessment ("stress tests"); the European Nuclear Safety Regulatory Group (ENSREG) and the Commission are invited to develop as soon as possible the scope and modalities of these tests in a coordinated framework in the light of lessons learned from the accident in Japan and with the full involvement of Member States, making full use of available expertise (notably from the Western European Nuclear Regulators Association, WENRA); the assessments will be conducted by independent national authorities and through peer review; their outcome and any necessary subsequent measures that will be taken should be shared with the Commission and within the ENSREG and should be made public; the European Council will assess initial findings by the end of 2011, on the basis of a report from the Commission."

Further information:

More detailed information on the stress tests you can find here

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/safety/stress_tests_en.htm