



PRELIMINARY APPROVAL PROTESTED. Protesters shout slogans against a Japanese nuclear plant which won preliminary approval for meeting stringent post-Fukushima safety requirements, near the Diet Building in Tokyo. The Nuclear Regulation Authority gave preliminary approval to a report that concludes that two reactors at the Sendai Nuclear Power Station have complied with the new regulations and are capable of avoiding disasters such as the Fukushima Dai-ichi meltdowns, even if the plant faces equally harsh conditions. The placard at right reads "Change energy policy!" (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Japanese nuclear plant deemed safe, nears restart

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO—A Japanese nuclear plant has won preliminary approval for meeting stringent post-Fukushima safety regulations, an important step toward restarting the country's first reactors under the tighter rules applied after the 2011 disaster.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority accepted a report that found the design upgrades and safety improvements at Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s two reactors at the Sendai Nuclear Power Station have complied with the requirements introduced last July.

The regulators deemed the plant capable of avoiding severe accidents in situations equal to what occurred at Fukushima Dai-ichi, where an earthquake and tsunami critically damaged the plant, causing reactor meltdowns that released radiation into the nearby community. All of Japan's 48 remaining reactors are offline for safety checks and repairs since the 2011 disaster.

Five regulatory commissioners unanimously agreed to move to a next step, a 30-day technical public comment period that ends August 15, before a final approval.

Authority chairman Shunichi Tanaka called it "a major step" and that the inspection for the Sendai plant incorporated lessons from Fukushima, particularly focusing on ways to build layers of protection in case of serious incidents in a country prone to natural disasters, including volcanic activity, earthquakes, tsunami, and typhoons.

"Previously, safety inspections were merely design-based, but this time we focused on how to prevent severe accidents," he told a weekly commissioners' meeting, which was repeatedly disrupted with anti-nuclear protesters heckling from the floor.

Multi-layer steps are mainly to protect the reactor core and its containment chamber from damage, and plans are also underway to reduce radiation leaks to a fraction of the amount released in Fukushima. The operator upgraded the equipment's seismic resistance and were to triple the tsunami seawall to 50 feet, Tanaka said. Other risks such as terrorist attacks, airplane strikes, and violent volcanic explosions also have been considered.

The Sendai plant is surrounded by at least five active volcanoes. Commissioner Kunihiko Shimazaki, a seismologist, said it's difficult to accurately predict eruptions, but current assessment suggests a catastrophic eruption is

"extremely unlikely."

Though public opposition over restarts exceeds support, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has been calling for restarts, saying a prolonged shutdown hurts Japan's economy and reversing a nuclear phase-out policy adopted by the previous government. The safety approval for the Sendai plant and its expected restart marks a big boost for the nuclear industry.

"I take this as a step forward," Abe told reporters. "When there is a final decision that the plant is safe, we will proceed with a plan to restart the reactors, while trying to gain understanding from local communities and the residents."

It will still take a few more months to get the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai Nuclear Power Station online, officials said. The operator has to clear final steps such as on-site checks, followed by obtaining local government consent, before the two reactors resume operations. Two reactors in western Japan had been briefly reactivated to avoid a summertime power crunch but have been since switched off pending safety checks.

Opponents say the approval is premature, because some of the key safety measures including filtered vents to reduce radiation leaks can wait for two years and communities still lack adequate evacuation plans. They say regulators are too optimistic to assume a massive volcanic eruption is unlikely, and they worry if adequate protection is considered in case of contaminated water leaks as in Fukushima.

Many Japanese nuclear reactors years ago were built fairly close to densely populated areas under loose safety standards and evacuation requirements. Recent simulations and drills in some communities showed it would take more than two days for all residents to evacuate out of the zone.

"Japan is a volcanic island. Volcanoes are considered a weak point for Japan," said Terukatsu Yoshida, who was among dozens of protesters who opposed the Sendai plant's restart outside the authority's building in Tokyo.

The Sendai plant is 600 miles southwest of Tokyo and on the southern tip of Japan's Kyushu island. Regulators in March placed the plant, which operates two of 19 reactors nationwide that are undergoing safety checks, on a fast-track for safety approval, largely because the operator was quick to raise the bar on tsunami and earthquake safety.

Regulators will now shift to screening the remaining 17 reactors that applied for inspection.

Actors exchange 'I do's' on Chinese concert stage

HONG KONG (AP)—In the closing act at a charity event, Chinese actress Zhou Xun sang two songs then stayed on stage for the best of encores.

Rumors had swirled beforehand that Zhou would be announcing her engagement to actor Archie Kao at the concert in Hangzhou, the capital of China's eastern province of Zhejiang.

But after she sang, she went backstage to change her outfit and reappeared in an ivory Chanel wedding gown, holding a bouquet. As the crowd broke into a loud cheer, she was joined on stage by Kao, wearing a black tuxedo.

The couple surprised everyone by announcing that they were getting married on stage. They went on to exchange vows and rings in front of the audience.

After saying "I do," Kao told the crowd, "It's love that brought us all here tonight, and it's also love that brought me and my



ONSTAGE I DO'S. Chinese actress Zhou Xun, right, wearing a wedding gown, stretches her hand to Chinese-American actor Archie Kao during a concert in Hangzhou in east China's Zhejiang province. Zhou and Kao surprised everyone by announcing they were getting married on stage at the concert in Hangzhou. They went on to exchange vows and rings in front of the audience. (AP Photo)

wife together."

A beaming Zhou said she's played a bride in several movie roles, but is happy that she's getting her own happy ending.

Zhou's official Weibo account quickly posted a photo of the two, in their wedding ensemble, sharing a kiss. It's the first marriage for both.

Zhou, 39, is one of

China's most sought-after actresses and made her Hollywood debut in *Cloud Atlas*, starring alongside Tom Hanks and Halle Berry.

Kao, 44, is a Chinese-American actor whose credits include the television series "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*.

A NEW LAND USE MAP FOR PORTLAND, COMING THIS SUMMER

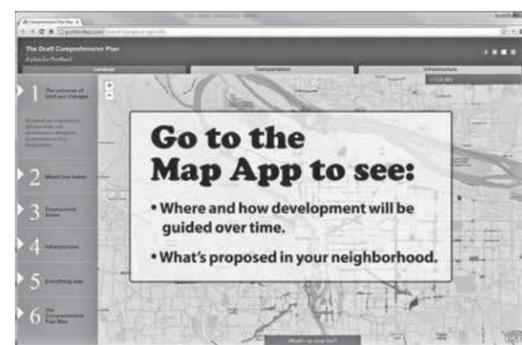


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The Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft will be released July 21.

Share your feedback with the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC):

- Through the Map App.
- Submit written comments.
- Testify in person at one of the public hearings to be held September through November 2014.
- Tips for testifying: www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/383947

Informational open houses in September will help Portlanders understand the proposal and prepare testimony. After considering public testimony, the PSC will forward a Recommended Plan to City Council in early 2015.

Visit www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/pdxcomplan or call 503-823-7700.

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is committed to providing equal access to information and hearings. If you need special accommodation, translation or interpretation, please call 503-823-7700, the City's TTY at 503-823-6868, or the Oregon Relay Service at 711.



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