

IAEA calls for tsunami warning system to improve nuclear safety

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VIENNA – The International Atomic Energy Agency outlined the need to establish an “active tsunami warning system” to enhance the safety of nuclear power plants in a report made available Friday.

Such a system was not available at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant when it was hit by the March 11 tsunami, leaving no time for an appropriate response to the event, the report says.

“Apparently, the tsunami warning and notification system was not available to provide an appropriate and timely response for plant reaction to the event,” IAEA nuclear safety experts say in the report.

In the report’s 160 pages, the experts, who visited Japan between May 24 and June 2, list 15 conclusions and 16 lessons learned from the accident, outlining how safety of nuclear power plants can be improved worldwide when it comes to protecting facilities against external threats.

The report mentions the importance of protective measures against “infrequent and complex combinations of external events” when choosing a site for and planning a nuclear power plant.

The need to establish secure alternative power sources in case off-site power is lost and to have well-trained and experienced staff are also mentioned.

The experts urge the international community to “take advantage of the unique opportunity created by the Fukushima accident to seek to learn and improve worldwide nuclear safety.” The team concluded that a followup mission “should look at the lessons to be learned from the emergency response on- and off-site.” They also give credit to the people struggling on the ground with the crisis, concluding that “given the extreme circumstances of this accident the local management of the accident has been conducted in the best way possible.”

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<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110619a6.html>