

Japan: 40% of Japan nuclear tech exported over past decade failed to go through safety check

Tuesday 5 November 2013, by [Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 14 October 2013).

About 40 percent of Japanese nuclear plant equipment exported over the past decade — worth some 51.1 billion yen — failed to go through national government safety inspections, the *Mainichi Shimbun* has learned.

The government conducts safety inspections on nuclear plant equipment that is to be exported only if manufacturers receive loans from the government-affiliated Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), or take out insurance policies from Nippon Export and Investment Insurance, an independent administrative agency. This is in sharp contrast to the requirement that all devices for domestic nuclear power stations be subject to strict government safety inspections.

An expert involved in the Japan Atomic Energy Commission's compilation of a new nuclear power policy outline said the finding highlights insufficiencies in the government's system to examine nuclear plant equipment for export.

"It came as a surprise to me that many exported nuclear plant-related devices failed to undergo safety inspections," said Keio University professor Masaru Kaneko. "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe claimed in a speech overseas that Japan can provide the world's safest atomic power technology, but how can Japan guarantee the safety of nuclear plant equipment Japanese firms export without a proper system to examine it?"

Japanese manufacturers exported some 124.8 billion yen worth of nuclear plant equipment to 23 countries and territories from 2003 to 2012, according to the Finance Ministry's trade statistics.

Of that, some 73.7 billion yen worth sold to five countries — China, the United States, France, Belgium and Finland — received prior government safety inspections, according to documents that the Mainichi has obtained from the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy under the freedom of information system. The remainder, worth approximately 51.1 billion yen, failed to go through such checks.

Devices exported without going through safety inspections include those for the installation at Taiwan's fourth atomic power station, and repair works in Sweden and Brazil, according to manufacturer officials and the Japan Electrical Manufacturers' Association's internal documents.

Three major manufacturers of nuclear plants — Hitachi, Ltd., Toshiba Corp. and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. are among the manufacturers that exported relevant equipment without safety inspections. Among the items exported without inspection are key components such as nuclear reactor pressure vessels, their lids and control rod driving systems.

Since many sections of the documents released by the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy had

been redacted, it remains unclear whether all the 73.7 billion yen worth of devices underwent full government safety checks.

Mainichi Shimbun, October 14, 2013

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